

TEXTS OF EMPOWERMENT: A FUNCTIONAL RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF
MS. MAGAZINE IN THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

BY

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Abstract

Ms. was the first mass mediated feminist magazine in the United States and has often been identified as an icon of the feminist movement. This study examines three rhetorical sites in the magazine during the first five years of publication including the relationship between the readers and the magazine as developed in letters to the editor, the rhetorical depictions of men and the rhetorical depictions of women as portrayed in the letters, the articles, the editorial content and the covers. From a functional perspective, each chapter examines the messages in *Ms.* in relation to their intended function for the readers. Chapter one introduces the magazine and justifies its importance as a rhetorical artifact. Chapter two examines the letters to the editor arguing that the treatment of the letters in *Ms.* created a consciousness-raising forum in the magazine which included the most effective aspects of second wave consciousness-raising and broadened the method in a mediated forum. Chapter three examines the depiction of men in the magazine focusing on the use of Kenneth Burke's concept of secular redemption to create a new vision of masculinity. Chapter four analyzes the rhetorical process of conversion to feminist ideals and the promotion of the new woman in *Ms.* Chapter five suggests that *Ms.* was rhetorically effective in creating mediated consciousness-raising forum, redefining masculinity to carve out room from sympathetic men in mainstream feminism and mapping a process for women to recognize and fight gendered oppression.

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Chapter 1: Why Study *Ms.*?

Introduction

A few years ago, I traveled to New York City to attend the *Ms.* Millennium Conference sponsored by *Ms.* magazine. As a student preparing to write my dissertation on *Ms.* and the rhetoric of the second wave of the feminist movement, I felt the trip was necessary for research and was interested in seeing both those responsible for the production of the magazine and those who read it and cared enough to journey to New York City without an ulterior academic motive. Through my research, I knew that the preview issue of *Ms.* generated massive reader response when it first appeared on newsstands. I had read the first regular issue's editorial report which explained "letters came pouring into our office: more than 20,000 long, literate, simple, disparate, funny, tragic, and very personal letters from women all over the country. They . . . generally spoke of *Ms.* as 'our' magazine" (*Ms.*, 1972a). However, I wondered whether levels of reader involvement with the magazine might have waned during the ensuing 28 years.

I expected to find myself among New York insiders, personal friends of Gloria Steinem and the current editor, Marcia Ann Gillespie, and women who successfully have made feminism the focus of their academic careers. However, when I walked into the ballroom at the Grand Hyatt, I began to understand the immensity of the reader involvement in and commitment to the magazine. Ordinary women from all over the country were the primary conference participants. Some had traveled farther than I, spending their own money to pay tribute to a magazine,

which, for many of them, represents the movement. Loyalty to the magazine appeared to be as strong as ever as I watched ordinary subscribers engage in passionate debates about everything from the goals of the feminist movement to the definition of the term itself. The famous feminist attendees such as Robin Morgan, Kate Millet, Gloria Steinem, Marcia Ann Gillespie, and Maya Angelou were inundated with requests for pictures, autographs, and sometimes merely a handshake as the readers sought a connection with people they knew solely through the pages of *Ms.*

Justification

My experience in New York furthered my belief that *Ms.* is an important artifact that should be analyzed in order to understand the rhetoric of the modern feminist movement. *Ms.* is uniquely suited for such an analysis for several reasons: (1) *Ms.* is representative of the modern feminist movement to both feminists and the mainstream public; (2) *Ms.* represents a broad range of feminist theoretical and literary voices; (3) *Ms.* is a contested rhetorical site; (4) *Ms.* provides every day, non-professional feminists a forum for discussion in their letters to the editor.

First, *Ms.* has been referred to as “one of the most successful architects of women’s social, economic, and political agendas” (PR Newswire, 1997), an “icon of feminism” (Hopkins, 1997), “the first periodical to treat women like people” (Skenazy, 1997, p. 31), and the “mouthpiece of the American feminist movement” (Krum, 1998, p. 7) among other descriptions which have suggested the magazine is “synonymous, for many Americans, with the movement itself” (Farrell, 1998, p. 1).

Scholars have touted the immense levels of reader involvement as a singular phenomenon, not replicated by any other mass marketed periodical in the United States (Farrell, 1998; Thom, 1997). *Ms.* was originally lauded as widening the voice of the feminist movement by displacing the “stars of the women’s lib movement” and representing “the movement’s larger constituency” (*Christian Science Monitor*, 1972, p. 16). Additionally, for many outside the movement, *Ms.* has been synonymous with feminism in America since *Ms.* has also appeared as the representative of the feminist voice in non-feminist popular culture (Thom, 1997, p. 179). In fact, *Ms.* editors saw the publication as a chance to expand the Women’s movement. This effort was a success. In 1973, “82 percent of *Ms.*’ audience was unaffiliated with women’s liberation groups” (Mather, 1975b, p. 23). This provided a large audience of potential converts for the magazine. As they continued to publish, *Ms.* came to symbolize second wave American feminism to feminists and non-feminists alike.

Second, *Ms.* is representative of a broad variety of feminist writers and perspectives ranging from traditional liberal feminism to more radical perspectives. “*Ms.* does not depend upon a stable of professional writers, a policy which has resulted in several excellent ‘first publications’ for women” (Mather, 1975b, p. 22). Many previously unknown women gained notoriety by publishing in *Ms.* In the first year alone, *Ms.* included writers such as Angela Davis, Nikki Giovanni, Erica Jong, Gerda Lerner, Kate Millet, Toni Morrison, Sylvia Plath, Gloria Steinem, Shelia Tobias, Alice Walker, and many others. That year *Ms.* featured 530 authors (Felder, 1999, p. 269). Over the ensuing years of its publication, *Ms.* has been the most

prominent mass-marketed periodical to represent a wide variety of feminist literary and theoretical perspectives. “*Ms.* pioneered discussion of women's health care, rape, sexual abuse, and genital mutilation” (Felder, 1999, p. 269). In fact, the desire to appeal to a wide audience may have prevented *Ms.* from resolving internal ideological tensions. However, “*Ms.* still both reflected and shaped the zeitgeist of its era, speaking directly and unapologetically for a feminist point of view that was both revolutionary and revitalizing” (Felder, 1999, p. 269).

Third, despite the widespread devotion of readers and acceptance of *Ms.* as the voice of feminism, *Ms.* has drawn criticism from feminists for failure to represent diversity and for appealing to “middle class heathens from academia to condominiumville” (Dekkers, 1972, p. 19). *Ms.* also has been accused of substituting itself for the women’s movement while “blocking authentic activists and ideas” (off our backs, 1975a, p. 7). Rather than highlighting *Ms.*’ lack of suitability as an object of feminist rhetorical history, these criticisms show that *Ms.* is a site of rhetorical agon. Debate about *Ms.* among feminists points to its import as an object of analysis rather than its insufficiency because it allows critics to examine differing, contested interpretations of feminism, gender and activism in our society.

Finally, in addition to representing perspectives of a wide variety of professional feminists, *Ms.* has consistently provided a forum for its readers to express feminist principles, and to share experiences and ideals. From the beginning, *Ms.* resonated with American women. “In January 1972, the first U.S. feminist, mass-circulation magazine for women . . . sold out across the country in eight days”

(Farrell, 1994, p. 707). The preview issue also “generated an astonishing 26,000 subscription orders and over 20,000 letters within weeks” (Liberty Media For Women). Throughout its years of publication, *Ms.* developed a tradition of giving “more space to letters than any other magazine” (Steinem, 1987, p. xi) partially due to the fact that their “monthly mail total is far bigger than that received by magazines with ten times” its circulation (Steinem, 1987, p. xi). In fact, in her keynote address at the *Ms.* Millennium Conference, Marcia Ann Gillespie stated that the letters and emails from readers have been a “great joy” to her, that she reads all the letters, and that she appreciates their support and criticism. Indeed, she said that the magazine “belongs to the readers” (Gillespie, 2000). In the same vein, Gloria Steinem said, “I never wanted to stop reading the words of generous, time-giving readers who keep us connected, accountable, and on the edge of change” (Steinem, 1987, p. xiii).

Literature Review

In assessing the literature, I found three relevant categories of analysis. Since this study seeks to interpret the rhetoric of the second wave, rhetorical and historical approaches to second wave feminism should be reviewed. Additionally, historical and rhetorical approaches to feminist media, specifically periodicals, must be understood in order to understand the place of *Ms.* as a mass mediated representation of American feminism. Finally, studies examining the rhetoric of *Ms.* itself must be examined.

Historical and Rhetorical Approaches to American Feminism

Exploring women's history has "revolutionary implications" (Norton, 1986, p. 1). In fact, "in the last 15 years, scholars' have realized that the history of half the world's population has not been fully integrated into the historical record" (Norton, 1986, p. 1). To remedy this oversight, historians began to focus on discovering and recording women's experiences. One area of concern has been creating a record of the feminist movement in the United States. Historical approaches to feminism often have focused on the first wave in which women won the right to vote (Campbell, K. K., 1989; Flexner & Fitzpatrick, 1996; Frost & Cullen-DuPont, 1992; Wheeler, 1995a; Wheeler, 1995b) or on women's history as it reflects the whole of American history (Hymowitz & Weissman, 1978; Kerber & De Hart, 1991; Kerber, Kessler-Harris, & Sklar, 1995) or twentieth century history (Rowbotham, 1997). Recently there has been a move to record the historically significant events of the second wave of American feminism (Brownmiller, 1999; DuPlessis & Snitow, 1998; Davis, 1999; Rosen, 2000; Wandersee, 1988) without examining the rhetoric produced by the movement itself. Finally, one recent study sought to analyze the rhetoric of feminism in the second wave and its implications for a third wave (Biesecker-Mast, 1995). While each of these approaches embodied significant scholarship, several failed to examine the artifacts of the feminist movement as rhetoric rather than as historical documents. Additionally, Biesecker-Mast's approach to feminist rhetoric maintained a narrow focus on three primarily theoretical feminist texts.

Initially, Kerber and Dehart (1991) collected essays and primary documents from three eras in American history including traditional America, industrializing America, and modern America. Their goal was to “study women’s history . . . to take part in a bold enterprise that can eventually lead us to a new history . . . by taking into account both sexes” (p. 24). In this vein, Hymowitz and Weissman (1978) committed to “the importance of women’s history” (p. xi). Hymowitz and Weissman covered four eras including revolutionary America, the 19th century reformers, the civil war, industrialization and the modern era. Pursuing a similar goal of writing women into historical texts, Kerber, Kessler-Harris, and Sklar (1995) argued that women’s history has traditionally been “vulnerable to marginalization” (p. 13) and that there “must be room for women in its center” (p. 14). Rather than using a chronological approach, Kerber et. al. divided *U.S. History as Women’s History* into topical sections including state formation, power, and knowledge. The essays in this volume feature a “veritable ‘who’s who’ in women’s history” (Kealey, 1996, p. 469) and use historical and literary approaches to reclaim American women’s history.

Narrowing in on the twentieth century, Rowbotham (1997) wrote a comparative history of women in Britain and the United States which has been described as a “scrupulously researched, remarkably far ranging, decade by decade study of American and British women from 1900 to the present” (Linfield, 1999, p. 5). Although Rowbotham’s book has been called a “work of stunning scholarship,” its comparative approach focused on historical “trans-Atlantic links among women” (Jennings, 1998, p. 51) rather than on the rhetoric of the American feminist

movement. Felder (1999) focused on women's history in the twentieth century in the United States in a chronicle, which tried "to delineate the influential events that have shaped the destiny of women during the twentieth century" (p. xii). Her chronologically organized history took a broad approach to events that have shaped women's experience in the last hundred years. Felder chronicled ideological, social and political aspects that are crucial components of women's experience in modern America.

As feminists who participated in the activism of the 1970s aged and younger generations made their way to the social and political fore, the impulse to record historically significant aspects of the second wave of feminism became reasonable. Evans (1979) examined the roots of the women's movement in the civil rights movement and the new left lending these events the "historical dignity their complexity deserves" (Langer, 1979, p. 9). Wandersee (1988) examined a "tumultuous and contradictory" (p. xi) period in American women's history, the 1970s. She relied on primary sources in analyzing the women's movement as it interacted with and was shaped by the political climate of the time. Wandersee concluded that the full impact of the feminist movement will be determined over time as we gain perspective in the context of broader historical events. DuPlessis and Snitow (1998) suggested that modern historical accounts often relegate feminism to footnotes and that the movement itself has too often "erred in a silent direction," allowing the history of feminist activism to "blend into the background of other events" (p. 24). To remedy this lack of historical center, DuPlessis and Snitow

gathered thirty-two different authors who were feminist activists in “New York; Chicago; Washington, D.C.; San Francisco; New Mexico; Georgia; and elsewhere” to reflect on their experiences and memories of the second wave of the feminist movement. However, these “intimate accounts” have been criticized as “rambling memories” which sidetrack the book from its historical import (Miller W. N., 1999, p. 16). Additionally, the laissez-faire editorial style resulted in a group of “unmediated voices immersed in the lexicon and assumptions of another time” which “might not be intelligible to the collection’s projected audience” (Wilson A. , 1999, p. 3).

Brownmiller (1999) also wrote to prevent people from forgetting the significance of the second wave. “The desire to record what happened in the 1960s and 1970s clearly drives” Brownmiller’s efforts (Miller L. , 1999, p. 24). She wrote, “I set out to write this memoir with a sense of urgency because I could see that much of the movement’s story had already been lost or distorted” (Miller L. , 1999, p. 10). Brownmiller’s “remarkably detailed examination of events from the perspective of someone who was at the center of the action” (Barrs, 1999, p. 4), relied on several interviews with “actual participants” (Harvin, 1999, p. D1) to create a read which has been compared to “looking at a collection of snapshots curled at the edges but still in vivid focus and colors” (Bell, 2000, p. 46). While some have suggested Brownmiller’s account is a “worthy addition to women’s history” (Giordano, 1999, p. E3), others have criticized her approach as overly “partisan” (Echols, 1999, p. B12) or as relying on “gossip” as primary source material resulting in an inauthentic history (Linfield, 1999, p. E3).

Davis (1999) wrote a history seeking to “provide not only a record of achievements but . . . enough detail about how things were done and where the pitfalls lay to help activists work for a better future” (p. 11). Davis organized the book both chronologically and topically in a way that “gives us all we ever wanted or needed in nitty-gritty details and explicit actions about the women’s movement in America since 1960” (Griffin, G., 1992, p. 10F). Rosen (2000) began her history of the modern women’s movement in the 1950’s explaining the cultural conformity that Betty Friedan (1963) would later label the *Feminine Mystique*. She traced the roots of the movement in the activism of the sixties and consistently linked “American political culture” to women’s activism (Rosen, 2000, p. xiv). However, Rosen has been criticized for her incomplete analysis of feminism’s failures and her over-reliance on public opinion polls for evidence (Linfield, 2000, p. 2).

Rather than tracing the history of the women’s liberation movement per se, Baxandall and Gordon (2000) created a “stylish, far-ranging and thoughtfully annotated anthology of the women’s liberation movement” (Winters, 2001, p. 31). Focusing on the 1960s and 1970s, they presented an “evocative collection of manifestos, ultimatums, poetry, and graphics from the early . . . days of radical feminism” (Stansell, 2001, p. 23), which attempted to include “evidence of conflict as well as cooperation” that was essential to the growth of the feminist movement (Baxandall & Gordon, 2000, p. 1).

Each of the aforementioned authors sought to record women’s history through scholarly essays, historical tracts and actual historical documents. However, none

attempted to look at the movement from a rhetorical perspective. On the other hand, Biesecker-Mast (1995) used a rhetorical perspective to analyze modern configurations of the term “feminist.” In her dissertation, *Vital Signs: Rhetorical Reconfigurations of the “Feminist” for a Third Wave*, Biesecker-Mast sought to provide an historical genealogy of the feminist movement. The bulk of her rhetorical analysis focused on three primarily theoretical texts including Faludi’s *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*; Wolf’s *The Beauty Myth*; and Steinem’s *The Revolution From Within*. These texts do not broadly represent the feminist movement ideologically or rhetorically.

Thus, there are several historical approaches to feminism focusing both on the first and second wave. While these studies have provided valuable contributions to understanding the women's movement in the context of history and as a historical phenomenon, they did not examine the persuasive strategies and process used to reach mass audiences during the 1970s. One way to articulate this process is to use *Ms.* as a representative anecdote for the symbolic negotiations within the movement and between the movement and mainstream society. Many of the aforementioned historical approaches mentioned *Ms.*, but have limitations. First, the inclusion of *Ms.* was generally brief and sporadic. Second, *Ms.* was cited as a historical source rather than examined as a rhetorical artifact. In other words, *Ms.* was looked at as primary source material for determining the facts of the feminist movement rather than as a discursive space where symbolic interpretations of the movement were negotiated. In addition to the historical approaches, Biesecker-Mast attempted to define the rhetoric

of feminism for a third wave. While Biesecker-Mast examined rhetoric as a persuasive process of symbol use, her focus bypassed the formative years of the 1970s and did not analyze *Ms.* as representative of the ideas and symbolic negotiations of the feminist movement.

Historical and Rhetorical Approaches to Feminism and Media

Feminist criticisms of mass media.

In 1963, Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, arguing that the “core problem for women is a problem of identity – a stunning evasion of growth that is perpetuated by the feminine mystique” (1983, p. 77). She analyzed the content of magazines such as *Ladies Home Journal*, *Mademoiselle*, *Redbook*, and *McCall’s* and argued that this “problem with no name” was perpetuated through mediated messages to women. While Friedan did not explicitly indict media as an institution, her analysis suggested it represents and defines our gendered cultural expectations. Thus, in addition to being heralded as a major event in the revitalization of the women’s movement and as a work that “sounded a clarion call for change in the status of women” (Felder, 1999, p. 236), *The Feminine Mystique* was also an early feminist criticism of mainstream media.

Similarly, Tuchman (1978) argued that media is an important socializing agent in modern society. Her work examined “the depiction of sex roles in mass media and the effect of that portrayal on American girls and women” (p. 4).

Tuchman interrogated sex role stereotypes across media. Including television, newspapers, and magazines, she concluded that these portrayals constitute a “national

social problem" (p. 5) because they symbolically devastate women by promoting stereotypical roles and norms. Additionally, Tuchman analyzed mass marketed, non-feminist magazines.

Gitlin (1980) used Gramsci's notion of hegemony as "total social authority" to analyze social movements and the mass media. Gitlin suggested, "The more closely the concerns and values of social movement coincide with the concerns and values of elites in politics and the media, the more likely they are to become incorporated in the prevailing news frames" (p. 284). In other words, Gitlin suggested that incorporating social movements into mainstream media allows hegemonic forces in society to expand or contract thus incorporating social change and even turning "the opposition to its own advantage" (p. 291). Since media "have become crucial fields for the definition of social meaning" (p. 292), the process of contestation becomes key. Gitlin's analysis focused on movements against nuclear power and new left movements in general but failed to address the feminist movement in any depth. Further, Gitlin did not address the role of movement media per se. Rather, he focused on social movement interactions with mainstream mass media.

Winship (1987) argued that women's magazines offer a "schizophrenic mix" (p. 8) of gendered characteristics. She studied "the social processes and cultural codes which shape those magazines as a combination of 'survival skills and day dreams'" (p. 14) and traced the history of British magazines ending with an analysis of three modern magazines including *Woman's Own*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Spare Rib*, a women's liberation magazine. Finally, Winship examined the place of these

magazines in the context of other 1980's era magazines. While Winship conducted an interesting study, her work focused on British media and used a social anthropological perspective rather than rhetorical analysis. Additionally, Winship's study looked at both the feminist and non-feminist magazines in a mediated context rather than examining the persuasive goals of a feminist magazine in the context of the broader feminist movement

Ballaster, Beetham, Frazer and Hebron (1991) used a feminist approach to interrogate the "relation between literary and social theory in analysis of popular culture" (p. 2). They did not examine feminist magazines per se. Rather, they used a feminist ideological perspective to analyze mainstream women's magazines. They argued that women's magazines "subtly maintain sexual difference and women's subordination" (p. 1). While they did not "lay the blame for women's oppression at the door of women's magazines" (p. 173), they explained that the "women's magazine must be understood as a cultural form in which . . . definitions and understanding of gender difference had been negotiated and contested rather than taken for granted or imposed" (p. 176). Thus, Ballaster et al. concluded that women's magazines are a space for creation of cultural identities which offers readers a world "within which to construct and explore the female self" (p. 176). While they posed feminist questions about mass marketed women's magazines, they did not pose feminist questions about feminist magazines. They mentioned *Spare Rib*, a British feminist magazine. But, they did not conduct extensive analysis of the way that this magazine works in a

feminist context. Neither did Ballaster et al. examine the means of portraying feminist argument in a feminist forum.

Klassen, Jasper and Schwartz (1993) used “Goffman’s (1976) analysis of gender display and print ads as a framework” (p. 30). The study examined advertisements published in *Playboy*, *Newsweek*, and *Ms.* to gain a comparative perspective on images of “appropriate behavior for men and women in the United States” (p. 30). Klassen et al. included portrayals of men in advertising in their quantitative analysis of gender roles in magazine advertisements. They did not use a rhetorical perspective to analyze these advertisements. Further, they did not study these texts as they interact in a cultural persuasive context.

Lazier and Kendrick (1993) also studied gender roles in advertisements. Since advertisements have “vast power in shaping of popular standards” (p. 200), Lazier and Kendrick examined stereotypes of women in advertising. They used content analysis and semiotic analysis to argue for the skewed representation of beauty in magazine advertisements. Lazier and Kendrick suggested that we should “look beyond the rose colored glasses of Madison Avenue that sees primarily skinny, flawless, young blonds” (p. 216). Rather, they concluded, we should promote an advertising culture that represents a broader variety of looks including a more multicultural perspective. They did not use a feminist perspective to analyze these advertisements.

Hermes (1995) rejected overly academic analysis of messages in magazines, arguing that “texts acquire meaning only in the interaction between the readers and

the texts and that analysis of the text on its own is never enough to reconstruct these meanings” (p. 10). She conducted 80 interviews in an attempt to discover through ethnographic analysis the meanings of magazines in women's lives. Hermes suggested that despite readers’ claims that "their use of women's magazines" was "almost meaningless," the media in fact has a “hidden” meaning. Thus, she choose to use a social phenomenological analysis to examine the psychological bases of meaning production. Hermes’ analysis focused almost entirely on meaning created in the psyche of the reader without examining the rhetorical import of the magazine in a broader social context. While understanding readers’ responses is important, it neglects the strategic social and cultural issues involved in the production of the magazine in a particular social context.

Douglas (1995) examined a variety of mass media arguing that media traditionally enforces "suffocating sex-role stereotypes" (p. 6). In her "witty, smart," and "opinionated" (Kasper, 1994, p. E1) analysis, she attempted to account for the changes wrought in mass media's representations of sex roles as a result of the women's liberation movement. Douglas concluded that media have "engendered a cultural identity crisis" which both enforces and rejects traditional role expectations. She has been criticized for devolving into a "messy hodgepodge of familiar complaints and hyperbolic assertions" (Kakutani, 1994, p. C19). While Douglas lacked coherent organization and tended to make exaggerated claims, her analysis concerning the mixed messages conveyed to modern women points to the import of

studying mass media artifacts to understand the sense in which being a media "spectator" is an "increasingly political and politicizing act" (1995, p. 19).

In 1995, *SIGNS* published a special issue about feminism and media. Farrell explained that the issue is intended to evaluate the "complex relationships between the contemporary feminist movement and the commercial media" (p. 642). Farrell argued that "despite obvious improvements," media sources still "present women's issues and the feminist movement in ways that support antifeminist perspectives" (p. 642). Additionally, Farrell suggested that we use feminist criticism to remind us of the "importance of the media in shaping the public's understanding of feminism" and also to remind us of the need for "renewed activism of our own" (p. 645). In the same issue, Johnson argued that modern media continue to "amplify antifeminist opinion . . . in new and more subtle ways" (p. 711). One example of this phenomenon is the extensive media attention given to "women who were critical of the feminist project" (p. 712). To remedy this problem, Johnson suggested a dialogue between feminist academics and newsroom feminists which could bring "balance" and "fairness" to media accounts of the feminist project (p. 718).

Kozol (1995) examined media coverage of domestic violence since the late 1970s. She took a comparative approach looking at both news coverage and television and movies to guide her analysis. McDermott (1995) examined the way that "several powerful conduits to public discourse in American culture have elected, praised, and promoted" critics of feminism in their "specific representation of women's studies" (p. 670). Media accolades of feminist critics trivialize "feminist

analyses of power,” their “attempts to effect social change,” and cast “feminism as a hegemonic bully on American campuses” (McDermott, 1995, p. 671).

Rhode (1995) argued that, “for any social movement, the media play a crucial role in shaping public consciousness and public policy. Journalists’ standard framing, devices of selection, exploration, and emphasis can profoundly affect cultural perceptions (p. 685). Specifically, Rhode analyzed the feminist movement as portrayed in media. Problems in portrayals of feminism and the feminist movement begin with the

absence of women: their under representation in positions of influence; the not-so-benign neglect of women's issues; the premature post-mortem of the women's movement; and the media's own contribution to the “demise” that they claim only to describe. (Rhode, 1995, p. 686)

Rhode concluded that, feminists should exert a “greater voice” in shaping the image of feminism in today's media. Without additional involvement, feminist objectives will not be met.

Beck (1998) criticized media for clinging to the “white/male/middle-class bias” (p. 139) in relation to feminism. She argued that media's attraction to oppositional frames constructs feminists as “outsiders, troublemakers . . . evil women” (p. 139). Beck concluded that the “greatest hope” for improving images of women in media is to “put more women in decision-making positions” (p. 139).

Each of these authors either conducted a feminist analysis of non-feminist media or called for greater feminist participation in the creation of media. However, they did not critique or evaluate feminist media in the rhetorical context of feminism as a social movement. In fact, there is a substantial history of feminist publishing in the United States.

Historical approaches to feminist magazines.

In 1921, Freda Kirchwey published a plea for a revolutionary women's magazine in *The Suffragist*. She argued that existing women's magazines were designed to placate unhappy women and to make a "domestic career endurable to all married women" (p. 356). Instead, there was a need for a magazine addressing equal citizenship laws, social reforms and liberal divorce laws. She suggested that a militant women's magazine could "spread the feminist revolution" (p. 356). Because women "want wider political rights . . . want legal rights and industrial rights" and "want wider human rights" (p. 356), Kirchwey argued that a new type of women's magazine discussing these issues was necessary.

Mather (1974, 1975a, 1975b) traced the history of feminist periodicals in a three-part article. She argued that alternative publications are necessary for two reasons: First, they reveal "deficiencies in the traditional media" (1974, p. 82). Second, they serve as "catalysts in changing the establishment press" (1974, p. 82). Mather's analysis began in 1792 with *The Ladies Magazine* and traced the development of women's publications through suffrage and the second wave of the women's movement in America. According to Mather, feminist periodicals in the

1960s and 1970s grew out of women's discontent with sexist attributes of the wider underground press (1975a, p. 108). During the “five-year period from March, 1968, through August, 1973, more than 560 feminist publications appeared in the United States” (1974, p. 82). However, *Ms.* far surpassed comparable commercial feminist magazines such as *You* and *New Woman* which were “abortive and, at best, debatedly feminist” (Mather, 1975b, p. 22). Finally, Mather attempted to establish generic characteristics of the feminist press. Characteristics identified by Mather include: (1) “having women in power” (1975b, p. 23); (2) aversion to hierarchies (1975b, p. 23); (3) “a lack of competition with other movement periodicals” (1975b, p. 23); and (4) “increased emphasis on reader participation” (1975b, p. 23).

Charlotte Bunch used *Quest*, a magazine she helped found in 1974, to examine political and institutional aspects of feminist publishing. In an article originally published in 1967-68, she argued that feminist print media serves four functions. These are: first, printed media “conveys ideas and information about feminism . . . not readily available in the mainstream media” (p. 218); second, printed media is cheap and widely available; third, more than other media, print media “can devote . . . space and time to exploring various angles of an issue” (p. 218) ; fourth, print media also allows oppressed groups to control “words, thoughts, and deeds” enabling “alternative courses of action for their lives” (pp. 218-219).

Steiner (1992) traced women’s alternative media over 250 years. She argued,

Not only can . . . [women] . . . thus mount an effective challenge to dominant structure, ideology, and content, but they also derive

considerable intellectual and emotional satisfaction from producing and supporting their own women-controlled, women-oriented media. In and through communication they transform and empower themselves (p. 121).

Steiner also identified several characteristics of women's media including; embracing the "language of sisterhood" (p. 123); allowing but limiting men's involvement (p. 124); not requiring "professional experience or formal training in mass media" (p. 124); lacking "profit motive" (p. 125); seeking to provide maximum access to publications by being "self-conscious about subscription rates" (p. 126); addressing "geographically and/or stylistically specific populations" (p. 126); employing "egalitarian management" (p. 217); and, in some cases, being "run as collectives" (p. 217). *Ms.*, Steiner posited, is an exception to the rule. While recognizing several crises in *Ms.*' history, Steiner conceded that the modern *Ms.* "continues to sell out instantly at bookstores and newsstands" (p. 129).

In a similar vein, Smith (1993) argued that women's media allow them to "publicly challenge society and state their visions of the future" (p. 61). She traced the origins of feminist media and examined it as an alternative to traditional mass media sources. Additionally, she identified several organizational practices, which characterize feminist media. These are: "(1) their collectivist and collaborative processes; (2) the separatist impulse underlying media production; and (3) its reformulation by feminists of color" (p. 62). Smith concluded,

Knowledge and its production are fundamentally linked to the conference of power. Recognizing this, feminist media workers have provided vehicles for the production and dissemination of knowledge about their own and other women's lives. (p. 77)

Thus, for feminists to empower themselves and others through challenging traditional epistemologies, they must have access to and control over the production of alternate media.

Recently, Conrad (2000) revisited the history of feminist magazines. She reviewed the most prominent magazines of the suffrage movement and the liberation movement. "Second Wave feminism sparked thousands of women's newsletters, journals and pamphlets in hundreds of cities" (p. 71). However, Conrad suggested that the "most significant magazine moment of the decade was the birth of *Ms.* in 1972" (p. 71). The significance of *Ms.* is in its national circulation and its "defiantly standing tall on American's newsstands, right next to issues of *Forbes* and *Time* magazines" (p. 71). Conrad also praised "feminist periodicals that have not missed an issue since the '70s-like *Sojourner* and *off our backs*" (p. 71). She suggested using her formula for success as a feminist magazine, which includes flexibility, resilience, and loyalty to the feminist cause, would prolong the survival of the ever-growing array of new feminist periodicals.

Keeping historical records of the development of feminist media and magazines in particular is important to understanding the historical context out of which *Ms.* evolved. Kirchwey's call for a feminist magazine and accounts of the

characteristics of "women's media" pose interesting questions. However, the historical context of feminist magazines merely provides the backdrop for the emergence of *Ms.* as a force in the second wave of feminist persuasion. Additionally, these scholars were interested in providing historically based generic definitions of "women's media" and in accounting for general content, dates and titles of publications rather than closely analyzing the rhetorical aspects and implications of these publications in particular social contexts.

The Rhetoric of Ms. Magazine

From its inception, *Ms.* has consistently commented on and analyzed its own existence and purpose. Much of this commentary has been published in the magazine itself. For example, in 1973, *Ms.* published an external account of its origin, its projects and its goals for the future (Klagsbrun, 1973). Klagsbrun identified the magazine as a success because of the massive reader response and the influx of unsolicited manuscripts. Additionally, she praised the book projects *Ms.* had completed at that time. Finally, she discussed goals for the future of what was at the time still a fledgling magazine. Klagsbrun cited *Ms.*' reflective editorial policy saying, "we continue to examine our actions and attitudes, assessing our gains, and analyzing our mistakes to see how we can best contribute to changing women's lives and to exploring feminist goals" (p. 269). The theme of "exploration" and the idea of being a "source of contribution to the ideals of the women's movement" (p. 270) resonates in this brief, early history of *Ms.*

While accounts published by those associated with *Ms.* have tended to be glowing and historical, other critics have questioned the feminist credentials of the magazine. Phillips (1978) questioned whether *Ms.* is "just another member of the *Family Circle*" (p. 116). Suggesting that women have "long been viewed as a much more homogenous market for magazines than men," she wondered whether *Ms.* can be categorized in the "narrow fashion-food-home mold" (p. 117). Since "women's magazines can act as silent persuaders, conveying and reinforcing norms and values," Phillips examined the representation of women's occupations in *Ms.* and *Family Circle* (p. 119). Ultimately, women featured in *Ms.* tend to be much more involved in political and business life than those in *Family Circle*. Phillips concluded that,

The majority of *Family Circle* women remain tied to homespun activities and a narrow world of self-centered family concerns. *Ms.*'s women think about great issues and participate in social welfare . . . the New Woman is independent, serious and productive. Heroines of the new order are culturally important, politically engaged, economically productive and socially active. (pp. 124-125)

However, Phillips also maintained some reservations about the feminist credentials of *Ms.* as she argued that *Ms.* heroines blend "traditionally masculine roles of achievers and traditionally feminine feelings" resulting in characters who are "liberal, but not liberated" (p. 128). Thus, for Phillips, *Ms.* is ultimately a conservative social force.

In 1972, Dekkers recognized *Ms.*' burgeoning success pointing out that *Ms.* had more readers than the rest of feminist publications combined. Dekkers stated,

Ms. is making feminist converts of middle class heathens from academia to condominium ville. A slick, reputable looking magazine breaks down defenses and lets the word worm its way into the brain. *Ms.* is almost a violation of the truth in packaging laws. There is a female mindset on those glossy pages slipping into American homes concealed in bags of groceries like tarantulas in banana boats. (p. 19)

It is this potential for spreading radical ideas in traditional form that, for Dekkers, made *Ms.* a "major breakthrough for mass circulation periodicals" (p. 19) and a major force for ideological evolution across America.

As *Ms.* became more established, it also became subject to more criticism and controversy from both ends of the political spectrum. Conservatives criticized the magazine for emasculating men. Sobran voiced his unease with the status of men in the magazine by suggesting that, "To *Ms.*, there being two sexes shows an annoying want of economy in the Creator. One sex (and maybe a sperm bank) - that would be swell" (1974, p. 580). Sobran suggested that the Equal Rights Amendment, *Ms.* and the ideas they represent are sure to be the source of "vengeful litigation . . . frivolous social criticism . . . coarse ideological abstractions . . . and . . . relentlessly cynical assaults on old customs and civilities" (p. 581). Indeed, Sobran's analysis pointed to *Ms.* and to feminism in general as major forces of social decay.

Mazzei (1985) also criticized *Ms.* for viewing "men as the enemy of the women's movement" (p. 2). Categorizing all comments about men as derogatory, indifferent or favorable, Mazzei content analyzed four issues suggesting that *Ms.*

constructs men as the "devil" for the women's movement (p. 6). Negative images that contribute to this view of men include portrayals of men as "sexist" (p. 9), of men as "oppressors" (p. 12), of men as "unnecessary in love/sex relationships" (p. 14), and of men as the "destroyers" (p. 17). Mazzei ultimately concluded that this treatment of men encourages an "attitude of reverse discrimination" (p. 6) thus undermining the women's movement as a whole by upholding the "stereotypical image of feminism as a 'secretive, dogmatic, man-hating, elitist, arrogant and humorless movement'" (p. 31).

From the opposite end of the political spectrum, *Ms.* has been subject to equally scathing criticism. Lin Farley (1974) criticized *Ms.* for the "abysmal" coverage of issues regarding lesbianism and feminism (p. 11). She provided several suggestions for covering lesbianism as a social, political, and cultural issue. Far more damning than Farley's criticism were accusations leveled by the Redstockings, a New York based radical feminist group. In a 1975 press conference, The Redstockings suggested that *Ms.* constructs women as "inferior and damaged," that the corporate financing of *Ms.* was questionable and that Steinem and *Ms.* had been collecting information about participants in the women's movement for the CIA (off our backs, 1975a, p. 7). This news conference was followed up by a 16-page press release detailing the charges that Steinem was affiliated with the CIA, that corporate financiers improperly influenced *Ms.*, and that *Ms.* ignores or denigrates "struggles of down-to-earth women" (off our backs, 1975c, p. 8). In support of these claims, Willis (1978) criticized *Ms.* for an "obsession with electoral politics," denying the reality

that "men have *power* over women," perpetuating a "mushy, sentimental idea of sisterhood," attacking "sex roles rather than male power," and maintaining a "pervasive class bias" (p. 170). The radical view of *Ms.* as explained by Kathie Sarachild has become one of dismissiveness characterized by feminists' failure to "take *Ms.* seriously any more" (Carper, 1975, p. C2). Among these radical feminists were the members of the *off our backs* editorial staff who suggested that, while flawed, the Redstockings' criticism of *Ms.*' liberal agenda was accurate. However, they also conceded, "there are some women who, in the absence of *Ms.*, would not be reading anything connected with the feminist movement" (*off our backs*, 1975b, p. 8).

off our backs, among other radical feminist publications, solicited and published a response from Steinem which was kept "exclusive to the feminist press" in an attempt to limit "see-how-women-can't-get-along-stories" (Steinem, 1975, p. 6). In this letter, Steinem denied ties to the CIA while admitting she once worked with a group indirectly funded by the CIA. Steinem, however, seemed more upset by the attacks on the integrity of the magazine as she argued that the claims "that *Ms.* Magazine . . . might be gathering information are not only false and irresponsible, they are uninformed. People send *Ms.* material which they want to publish: literally, to make public" (Steinem, 1975, p. 6) . Additionally, Steinem cited the immense amount of work required to maintain a publication like *Ms.* arguing that the Redstockings' statement "maligns and batters" the efforts of the *Ms.* staff (p. 6). Steinem also suggested the Redstockings' press release promoted liberal McCarthyism. She states,

This "Release" does sound eerily like an attack by Joseph McCarthy. Both the release and the McCarthyite diatribes attempt to disqualify people and groups from working for political change by simply declaring arbitrarily that they are connected to whatever the most fearful, disreputable label of the day may be. In McCarthy's case, and in the larger political arena, it was the "International Communist Conspiracy." In this case, within the Women's Movement, it's a CIA Strategy." (p. 6)

The statements by both Steinem and the Redstockings are primary source material illustrating the rhetorical conflict in which *Ms.* continually found itself embroiled. These articles reflect the struggle to recognize the worth of *Ms.* as a feminist artifact. The mere fact that this struggle existed and was so vehement justifies further study of *Ms.* as a persuasive tool in a feminist milieu.

From a scholarly perspective, Steiner (1988) studied *Ms.*' "No Comment" feature to examine how social movements use media to create an oppositional voice. In "No Comment," *Ms.* reprinted sexist advertisements, cartoons, pictures of billboards, etc. Steiner suggested that *Ms.* uses this feature to "contest the dominant ideology" (p. 2) by republishing texts that are ideologically inconsistent with a feminist worldview. Publishing these texts without comment "lets readers feel superior because they have understood what outsiders have missed" (p. 6). Interestingly,

Ms. is not the first periodical to reprint comments about women from dominant media. Nineteenth century suffrage periodicals such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony's *Revolution* regularly included "Straws in the Wind" and "What They Say About Us" in order to mark shifts or the lack thereof in the status of the nascent breed of strong minded women. (Steiner, 1988, p. 10)

Steiner concluded that "No Comment" creates oppositional strategies that work to "shape and maintain their social identity" allowing them to "take up more effective interventions" (p. 12).

Ferguson, Kreshel and Tinkham (1990) examined the advertising in *Ms.* as it constructs sex roles. They content analyzed advertisements in *Ms.* looking at type of ads and several categories of manifest and latent content. Ultimately, Ferguson et al. concluded that advertisements in *Ms.* contain a high level of sexist content. At the time that this article was written, *Ms.* had suspended publication and was transitioning to an advertisement free magazine.

Clark (1993) analyzed *Ms.* as an "ideological vehicle in a consumer setting." By this, she meant that *Ms.* is a magazine based on consumerist ideology which supports fundamental notions of capitalism. Clark's analysis of *Ms.* suggested that she believes there is a fundamental contradiction between social change and continued adherence to capitalist ideology. Additionally, Clark traced ideological changes in *Ms.* during three time periods. She relied mainly on limited content analysis and documentary sources to complete her analysis. Her focus of analysis

was the interaction between *Ms.* and the publishing industry rather than *Ms.* as it situates itself in the rhetorical context of the women's movement. Clark's goal was to dissect the nature of the tension existing between "the magazine's ideological agenda and the notion of periodical as business concern" (p. 25). Ultimately, Clark concluded that *Ms.*' rejection of advertising is an attempt to resolve the conflict between the "mutually exclusive" ideas of "feminist principle" and "consumer ideology" (p. 123). McCracken (1993) also criticized *Ms.* for its notion of "liberational consumerism" (p. 278). She suggested,

The conflict between the magazine's commercial goals and its feminist ones surfaces in the interplay between the ads and the editorial material. The reinforcement between ads and editorial features at work in most women's magazines also functions in *Ms.* but this relation . . . becomes one of conflict and opposition. (McCracken, 1993, p. 280)

Because *Ms.* maintains a "progressive but non-radical" ideology, McCracken warned of the danger of "cooptation by commercial exigencies" (p. 282).

Since Gloria Steinem (1986) believes that there can be "no big social change . . . without words and phrases that create a dream of change in our heads" (p. 2) she and several other feminists worked to found *Ms.* magazine. Therefore, some accounts of *Ms.* are located in biographical accounts of Steinem's life. For example, Lazo (1998) recounted the birth of the magazine in the context of Steinem's biography.

She also wrote about the progression of the magazine as it reflects Steinem. For example,

"I'm only going to do this for two years," Steinem once said, as the overwhelming task of creating the first feminist magazine began. Ten years later, in 1982, she found herself center stage at the 10th anniversary of *Ms.* magazine. And there was real cause to celebrate. Describing the early problems of *Ms.*, Steinem told Don George, "We were running it with mirrors and Scotch tape, and it's a miracle it managed to survive." (Lazo, 1998, p. 98)

In the same vein, Heilbrun (1995) wrote a biography of Steinem with significant content related to *Ms.* She provided an historical account of the founding of *Ms.*, the interpersonal tensions among *Ms.*' staff, and the Redstockings controversy as these events effected Steinem. Both Lazo and Heilbrun's articles were historical accountings of events rather than critical analyses of the rhetorical or persuasive import of these events in the feminist movement.

Thom (1997) used an insider's perspective to provide a 25 year history of *Ms.* Her focus was on editorial policy, business aspects and general ideological trends. She argued, "its agenda did make *Ms.* seem more like a social movement than a national magazine" (p. 44). However, Thom's connection with the magazine made the story difficult to follow as "names and details seem to float in and out" without proper exposition for readers who haven't worked at the magazine (Lovelock, 1998, p. 42). Lovelock suggested that Thom showed the movement "through the *Ms.* lens"

(p. 42). In other words, her analysis was one-sided despite her attempts to maintain objectivity.

From an organizational perspective, Farrell (1994) demonstrated that *Ms.* "confirms much of what others have written about the characteristics, strengths, and limitations of collective organizations" (p. 727). She argued that *Ms.* was forced to choose between being effective in creating a democratic workplace and efficient in publishing a mass marketed magazine. Ultimately, Farrell concluded that the need for efficiency triumphed causing *Ms.* to be restructured into a more "professional," more "hierarchical" organization (p. 728).

Farrell (1995) also examined the ideological conflict inherent in trying to meet both political and economic demands for an extended time period. She argued that for

nearly two decades, the publication did balance readers' needs against the demands of the commercial publishing world so that the feminist magazine reached approximately 3.5 million readers. Like 'tarantula on a banana boat' *Ms.* slipped feminist ideas into the mainstream. (p. 67)

Farrell lamented the fact that "by the late 1980s this had become a balancing act too difficult to maintain" and *Ms.* had to convert to a noncommercial, reader-supported publication.

Farrell (1991; 1998) traced the origins of *Ms.* and analyzed three stages of the magazine's development: the 1970s, the 1980s and 1987-1989. She (1998) suggested

"*Ms.* served as a crucial public arena where the implications of the term 'feminism' and the feminist movement were worked out" (p. 1). Farrell analyzed *Ms.* by examining broad ideological issues common in criticism and historical accounts of the magazine. She also recognized the import of the readers in determining magazine policy and content. Finally, Farrell examined the conflicts involved in the attempt to maintain a popular feminist magazine.

Several critics have argued about the feminist credentials of *Ms.* (Phillips, 1978; Dekkers, 1978; Sobran, 1974; Mazzei, 1985; Farley, 1974; off our backs, 1975; Steinem, 1975; Willis, 1978) while others have analyzed *Ms.*' "No Comment" feature (Steiner 1988) or the advertisements featured in *Ms.* (Ferguson, Kreshel, and Tinkham, 1990; Clark, 1993; McCracken 1993). Historical accounts also frequently have recorded the history of the magazine (Klagsbrun, 1973; Thom, 1997; Farrell, 1991; Farrell, 1998) or the history of the magazine in the context of Gloria Steinem's life (Lazo, 1998; Heilbrun, 1995). However, there is no analysis of *Ms.* as a persuasive artifact in the context of the second wave of American feminism. Analysis of *Ms.* as it reflects and effects the broader historical discourse of feminism is an important project that has yet to be done.

Methodology

This study focuses on as *Ms.* magazine as one expression of the rhetoric of the women's liberation movement. While there is significant history of the feminist movement, some history of feminist media and analysis of *Ms.* itself, there is no study of *Ms.* as a rhetorical artifact. By this, I mean *Ms.* has not been explored as a site of

persuasion in the context of a historical moment. Rather, it has been lauded or criticized for being too feminist or not feminist enough. This study draws on historical and critical analyses to examine the rhetoric of *Ms.* as a major persuasive artifact for feminisms of the 1970s. Importantly, *Ms.* was read by self-identified feminists as well as by the 83% of the *Ms.* audience who were “unaffiliated with women’s liberation groups” in 1973 (Mather, 1975b, p. 23). Thus, *Ms.* represents a unique site of persuasion in the context of a broader movement. The focus of this study will be on the contested representations of concepts central to the feminist debate such as the depiction of men, the depiction of women, and the definition of feminism. Emphasis will be placed on the examining the function of the mediated dialectic presented in *Ms.*

Rhetorical Artifacts

This study will examine every issue of *Ms.* magazine during the first five years, from the preview issue in 1972 to the five year anniversary issue in 1977, in an attempt to rhetorically analyze both the persona and role prescriptions constructed by *Ms.* for each of three categories: its relationship with the readers; its depictions of men and its depictions of women. There will be four major areas of analysis: letters to the editor, editorial commentary, the text of articles that relate directly to the topic at hand and covers of the magazine.

Examining the letters to *Ms.* is important for three reasons. First, the magazine rhetorically centralizes readers by asking for reader response and devoting a great deal of space to publishing letters. Second, the published letters are

representative of a broader dialectic between the readers and the magazine. Third, the reader's letters represent all types of feminist opinions ranging from the most radical to the most conservative feminist ideologies.

Initially, the letters created an important and influential dialogue with the magazine. Thom points out that “the average letters column per issue published by the original *Ms.* group was between three and four pages compared to the page or two allotted by most national magazines” (Thom, 1997, p. 207). Additionally, *Ms.* created “special letters forums when response to an article was extraordinary” (Thom, 1997, p. 207). In addition to giving the readers ample space to respond to the magazine, “it was clear that the audience would become an essential collaborator in the process of producing feminist journalism at the magazine” (Thom, 1997, p. 205). Thom cites an unusual example of this collaboration.

Production chief Rita Waterman recalled an example of how seriously *Ms.* took complaints by readers. “There was that wonderful story of the Long Island Housewife,” said Waterman. “She wrote that she really enjoys the magazine, but she said, ‘I’m not there. Where am I in your pages?’ The editors invited her to come to a meeting. She sat in the conference room. She talked. They listened. And she ended up being on the cover. I loved that.” (Thom, 1997, p. 213).

This dialogue between the readers and the magazine also was indicative of the import of the magazine in the context of the broader women’s movement. “Indeed, the relationship the readers created with the magazine must be of central concern to

anyone interested in how this magazine worked as a resource within the second wave of feminism” (Farrell, 1998, p. 151). In fact, the readers “played a central role in the cultural contestation over *Ms.* magazine and over the word ‘feminism’ that it articulated” (p. 151). Readers were both supportive and critical of the content of the magazine in a way that perpetuated a dynamic dialogue about the meaning of feminism in American society.

Second, the *Ms.* staff published letters from many perspectives and “instituted a policy that ensured that the concerns of readers were addressed” (Farrell, 1998, p. 158). These editorial policies made *Ms.* into a “kind of mass media consciousness raising forum” (Farrell, 1998, p. 160). The published letters created a public dialogue between the magazine and the readers in which all readers could participate through reading the pages of *Ms.*

Third, the letters section allowed criticisms from many different perspectives. *Ms.* featured letters from a range of feminists and non-feminists. This diversity of ideas created a possibility for dialogue and disagreement with the editors and authors published in the magazine.

Editorial commentary also was important in shaping the rhetoric of *Ms.* The editors of *Ms.* originally “published ‘Personal Report’ once or twice a year, fully confident that their readers wanted all the details about what went on behind the pages” (Thom, 1997, p. 204). Analysis of this editorial commentary reflects the editors’ struggle to “cover issues that were beginning to divide the feminist community” (Thom, 1997, p. 209). Editors were keenly aware that they shaped the

rhetoric of *Ms.* and had the “power to construct the shape of feminism within *Ms.* and to direct its future as a resource within the women’s movement” (Thom, 1997, p. 157). The editorial commentary both allowed editors to respond to the readers and to reflect on their self-conscious influence on the feminist movement.

Clearly, the text of articles appearing in the magazine is another important area of analysis because it provides more in-depth constructions of the persuasive concepts in the rhetoric of the magazine and allows critics to understand the deeper implications of the debate. Analyzing the text also paints the fullest picture of the second persona implied in the magazine. Edwin Black (1970) argues that discourse implies a second persona, an “implied auditor” (p. 111). In evaluating the second persona for a rhetorical act, the critic excavates the implied audience from the text. Black suggests that often it is not the “actual auditor” but the “implied auditor” and the ability of the “critic to link this implied auditor to an ideology” (1970, p. 112) that is important in rhetorical analysis. The explanation of feminist arguments developed in the text provides fertile ground for critical evaluation of the second persona, the implied feminist reader of *Ms.* magazine.

Finally, feminist media theorists have identified the cover of the magazine as an important representation of the magazine. Winship identifies some reasons covers play an important role in rhetorically representing the magazine. She argues,

On any magazine stand each women's magazine attempts to differentiate itself from others also vying for attention. Each does so by a variety of means: the title and its print type, size and texture of

paper, design and lay-out of image and sell lines Cover images and sell lines . . . reveal a wealth of knowledge about the cultural place of women's magazines. (Winship, 1987, p. 9)

Additionally McCracken (1993) suggests that the cover serves several functions. First, she argues that covers provide an "idealized mirror image of the woman who gazes at them" (1993, p. 13). This image serves as a way to "link fantasy to . . . everyday life" (p. 13) and the purchase of a particular magazine allows one to "attain these ideal visions" (p. 13). In other words, the reader of the magazine perceives both who she would like to be and who she is in the cover of the magazine. Purchasing the product serves as an affirmation of selfhood. In the case of *Ms.*, analyzing the cover should shed light on the rhetorical construction of the ideal *Ms.* reader, her ideal man or woman, and the rhetorical construction of the "idealized" feminist. Thus, the cover images project idealized versions of a feminist second persona or implied audience for the text.

Second, the "front cover is the most important advertisement in any magazine" (p. 14). McCracken (1993) posits that the cover must be designed to entice "large groups of readers" to ensure a commercially successful venture (p. 18). The nature of the cover as an advertisement is especially important in studying the rhetoric of *Ms.* in the 1970s since the magazine was struggling to survive through advertising revenue without compromising their feminist ideology. Thus, the cover may at times look similar to other women's magazines in order to draw in the largest possible readership.

Third, the cover is the "vehicle by which we distinguish one magazine from another" (McCracken, 1993, p. 19). More simply, the cover provides rhetorical cues that tell readers what type of magazine they are looking at. In this way, specific signals engender generic expectations "just as we bring different expectations to detective novels and poems" (p. 19). *Ms.* covers are particularly interesting when one analyzes them in the context of genre because *Ms.* is a unique publication that does not fit in the genre of general interest magazine or in that of feminist newsletter. Instead, *Ms.* is a mass distribution feminist magazine that *looks* like a general interest women's magazine. Dekkers (1972) points to the import of this observation by suggesting that *Ms.* is a "slick, reputable looking magazine" (p. 19) which allows a feminist mindset to slip into mainstream American homes. Rhetorical analysis should examine the ways that the cover representations violate and fulfill gender and genre expectations.

Another interesting aspect of *Ms.* covers relates to the notion that the generic identity of the magazine signifies both the type of magazine and the type of person who reads it. McCracken argues,

Genre identity . . . plays a role in the reader's sense of self . . . The cover's generic encodings often operate in the public sphere, so that when making a newsstand purchase, reading in a public place or displaying the magazine on a coffee table, one identifies oneself as a Cosmo girl or a *Family Circle* Reader. (McCracken, 1993, p. 22)

Ms. readers were indeed making a political statement through the very act of associating themselves with the magazine. Gloria Steinem remembers,

A letter from a woman who said she had taken the Preview Issue to a much-feared job interview, carrying it like a badge of courage. The interviewer had been going to offer her less salary, he said. Seeing that she was into this “women’s lib” thing, however, he reluctantly offered her the same salary as he gave men. (1987, p. xii)

Thus, some readers used *Ms.* to rhetorically construct themselves as strong feminists to outsiders.

The fourth important aspect of the cover is that it serves as a frame for the magazine. It does this in two ways. First, the title is the magazine’s “brand name” (McCracken, 1993, p. 33). 33). “The title of the magazine presents an encoding frame within which the reader is to catalogue her perceptions of the material inside” (McCracken, 1993, p. 33). For *Ms.*, the title is especially significant in that it was chosen as an ideological representation of feminism’s desire to portray women as “female human being[s]” (Klagsbrun, 1973, p. 270). Thus, all the images on the cover must be analyzed in the context of a feminist perspective.

The fifth, important aspect of the cover as frame is its value as perspective for viewing the remainder of the magazine. In other words, the cover is the face of the magazine. “The cover functions as an interpretive lens for what follows by offering us pre-embedded definitions through the magazine’s title, the headlines, and the

photo” (McCracken, 1993, p. 36). In this way, the cover shades the reader’s interpretation of article content.

Analytical Approach

After conducting a broad, open-ended analysis, I will examine the text in terms of the rhetorical definitions of men and women as they relate to the definition of a *Ms.* affiliated feminist, the definition of feminism itself as it evolved throughout the 1970s and the popularization of feminist terminology. First, the definition of woman and the definition of man will be analyzed according to the following categories: gender difference vs. gender sameness; sexuality; the victim, survivor, aggressor triad; family roles as assigned according to gender and representativeness of race, class, alternate gendered constructions and age. Second, these findings will be examined in relation to the contested definition of feminism as it is developed through relevant topics during the 1970s. Finally, I will examine the rhetorical strategies used to introduce and legitimize feminist terminology as a persuasive device. In each case, it is important to look at the distinctions made between the individual persona and the role of an object of analysis in general because depictions of a feminist persona may conflict with or support broader role expectations.

Initially, the definitions of female and male are important constructs in the feminist debate. Because feminism indicts masculine patriarchy, the nature of traditional social constructions of male and female is often at the center of feminist analysis. As feminists create media, which are intended to redefine gender norms, it is important to analyze the way that feminists themselves construct new gender

identities. Critics must ask whether feminist depictions of men and women are truly emancipatory. It is important to interrogate the gender role development in feminist media to understand the nature of symbolic change that feminists seek to advance. Additionally, idealized definitions of gender promoted in *Ms.* contribute to the development of feminism in an American context. In order to understand the constructions of male and female in the magazine, I will analyze the representation of gender differences versus gender similarities between men and women. Feminist theory and practice place great import on the perceived differences between men and women. Liberal feminists argue that, while some differences may exist, men and women are both rational individuals who deserve equal education and the same political and natural rights (Donovan, 1992, p. 8). This approach “provides an image of woman as a rational responsible agent; one who is able, if given the chance, to take care of herself and further her own possibilities” (Donovan, 1992, p. 31). On the other hand, Cultural feminists argue that women and men are different and emphasize “the role of the non-rational, the intuitive, and often collective side of life” (Donovan, 1992, p. 31). In fact, “instead of emphasizing the similarities between men and women,” cultural feminists “stress the differences, ultimately affirming that feminine qualities may be a source of personal strength and pride and a fount or public regeneration” (Donovan, 1992, p. 31). For cultural feminists, feminism is a transformative philosophy rooted in the fundamentally pacifist character of the female value system” (Donovan, 1992, p. 62). Articulating the ways that differences are

constructed, valued or denied is necessary to understand gendered identities promoted in *Ms.*

Constructions of sexuality are an essential area of analysis because limited interpretations of these ideas have been used to entrench heterosexually biased gender distinctions, which discriminate against gay, lesbian and pansexual individuals. Additionally, identifying heterosexual women as merely sexual objects has been used as a means of masculine control.

Violence is another important issue in the construction of gender roles. Thus, depictions of victims or survivors and aggressors are necessary sites of investigation of gender role creation. Additionally, the recognition and rejection of family violence grew out of the feminist movement. *Ms.* and second wave feminists sought to eliminate violence rooted in traditional gender hierarchies and patterns of domination. In order to understand the dialectic about violence, analysis of the depiction of gendered roles in discussions of violence should be carefully dissected and examined.

Roles were another key site of contestation during the second wave. Betty Friedan first identified this problem in her groundbreaking work, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), where she argued that part of the "problem with no name" evolved from seeing women as merely the roles they fulfilled rather than as individual human beings. Additionally, feminist activists objected to excessive role focus even among liberal activists. In the Students for a Democratic Society, for example, "men sought [women] out, recruited them, took them seriously, honored their intelligence-then subtly demoted them to girlfriends, wives, note-takers, coffee makers" (Rosen, 2000,

p. 118). In this way, women felt they were marginalized into mere roles rather than treated as human beings. In order to understand the way that this feeling of marginalization was consistently challenged by second wave feminists, analysis of their discussion of traditional roles and development of new roles is necessary.

Finally, the use and popularization of feminist terminology is an important aspect of this analysis. Feminist terminology was developed to give voice to common experiences women had. Terms such as date rape and sexual harassment were popularized in *Ms.* Another example of feminist terminology that developed in the pages of *Ms.* is the term "click." In the preview issue, Jane O'Reilly wrote an article called "The Housewife's Moment of Truth" which used the term "click" to describe recognition of oppressive or sexist circumstances or the moment of raised consciousness. O'Reilly wrote, "The women in the group looked at each other, and click! The shock of recognition . . . One little click turns on a thousand others" (p. 54). The term click began to serve an enthymematic function in readers' letters replacing explanation of that moment of recognition and serving to connect women through their "click" experiences. Letters told countless personal stories of awakening. And, many were labeled by a single word . . . "click." In July 1972, one reader wrote, "For Christmas, I asked for money to take a class in painting, and he gave me an electric can opener. Click!" (Name withheld, 1972, p. 134). In the same way that women experienced click, the growing vocabulary of the feminist movement gave women the language to organize and process their experiences. Thus, further

analysis of the popularization of and meanings of feminist terms in *Ms.* may elucidate the cultural dialectic emerging from feminist terminology.

Ms. received criticism that claimed the magazine was representative of only the white middle class feminist movement and that it excluded black and Latino women. Examining the texture of multiculturalism in *Ms.* can test the veracity of these claims.

In sum, the categories of analysis including gender difference and sameness, constructions of sexuality, violence, roles, feminist terminology, and issues of representativeness all grew out of the historical trappings of the feminist movement. Each of these categories represents a site of dialectic in the feminist movement in the United States. Discussion involving these issues strikes at the heart of what it meant to be a member of the second wave of feminism in America. In this analysis, I will use these categories as an entry point to examine the symbolic debate that raged around feminism in 1970's America. Such analysis may reveal other important aspects of *Ms.*' symbolic trajectory.

Summary of Chapters

The remainder of the chapters will examine *Ms.*' rhetorical functions in various contexts of the feminist movement. Chapter two, *Letters to Ms., Mediated Consciousness-Raising* will discuss the relationship between readers and *Ms.* as developed in the readers' letters that were published in *Ms.* The letters offer unique and interesting insight to the way that readers actually responded to the magazine and incorporated it into their lives. Chapter three, *Men and Masculinities in Ms.*, will

examine coverage of men in the magazine. This analysis will allow examination of the rhetorical relationships between *Ms.* and different groups of men. Chapter four, *Picturing the Many Faces of Feminism in Ms.*, will examine the depiction of women in the pages of *Ms.* with a specific focus on paths to empowerment and the new woman as constructed in the magazine. Chapter five will summarize and draw conclusions based on the analysis conducted in the previous chapters.

Conclusion

Ms. magazine always has been situated at a unique intersection of media and feminism. As one of the first magazines catering to a mass feminist audience, *Ms.* has had a unique opportunity to shape the rhetoric of mainstream feminism. Analyzing this vision is essential to understand the broader ideological dialectic of the second wave of feminism in America.

Chapter 2: Letters to *Ms.*, Mediated Consciousness-Raising

Introduction

Ms. magazine has had enormous and durable social influence among women in the United States. Its ability to affect women in such a profound way was aptly described in its 2007 35th Anniversary issue. When asked to comment on the import of *Ms.* in the American feminist milieu, Alice Walker said, “I can’t imagine our lives without *Ms.* magazine It is the only periodical that connects with all women’s lives, including the parts that secretly delight and scare us” (Walker, 2007, p. 37). In the same issue, Dolores Huerta said, “*Ms.* magazine was crucial in the creation of the women’s movement . . . it inspired women to achieve our potential and to take our place in society as feminist leaders” (Huerta, 2007, p. 38). Finally, Whoopi Goldberg said, “*Ms.* magazine changed the course of history for modern women period. Who can say what direction things would have gone without that movement, but, there’s no question our eyes were opened and have remained so” (Goldberg, 2007, p. 37). In addition to demonstrating the importance of *Ms.* in American feminism, these comments all indicate that *Ms.* fundamentally changed the lives of American women by connecting with women, encouraging women to become activists and opening women’s eyes to social and role inequality.

One way *Ms.* influenced and communicated with its readers was through the letters to the editor section. “*Ms.* generated massive reader response when it first appeared on the newsstands” (Partlow & Rowland, 2001, p. 2). In the July 1972 issue, the editorial staff expressed their delight with the number and quality of letters

the magazine had received. They said that the “most gratifying experience” was receiving the letters in response to the Preview Issue (*Ms.*, 1972a, p. 6). In fact, “Letters came pouring into our crowded office: more than 20,000 long, literate, simple, disparate, funny, tragic and very personal letters from women all over the country . . .” (*Ms.*, 1972a, p. 6). These letters indicated a very deep level of personal interest in the magazine as many readers referred to *Ms.* as “our magazine” (*Ms.*, 1972a, p. 6). The letters sent a clear message to the editorial staff of the magazine. It was a message that, “*Ms.* had tapped an emerging and deep cultural change” that was shared between the staff and their “sisters,” the readers (*Ms.*, 1972a).

Response to the first issue of the magazine started a tradition of reader involvement that went far beyond the traditional single page of letters in other magazines. The editors of *Ms.* pledged to print more letters than in a typical magazine. In doing this, they set up a dialectical interaction between the editorial staff and the readers of the magazine that played itself out on the pages of *Ms.* In fact, “the letters were the main vehicle through which its audience helped shape the content of the magazine” (Thom, 1997, p. 208). In an effort to forge a relationship with their readers, *Ms.* devoted multiple pages to the letters in every issue and created special printed collections of letters when there was a great amount of reader response to a particular article (Steinem, 1987; Thom, 1997; Thom, 1987). This dialogue between the readers and the staff of the magazine had some unique rhetorical characteristics and functions.

In this chapter, I examine the first five years of letters to the editor and letters forums printed in *Ms.* to more fully explicate the rhetorical functions of a dialectic between the readers and an editorial staff who were trying to change the world. I argue that the *Ms.* 'Letters' section created a forum that served the rhetorical functions of a mediated consciousness-raising group. While *Ms.* has been referred to as a "kind of mass media consciousness raising forum" (Farrell, 1998), a rhetorical analysis discussing the consciousness-raising from a functional perspective has not been done. Yes, readers shared their stories on the pages of the magazine. But, the questions of why and how that functioned rhetorically have not been clearly interrogated. This chapter examines letters to *Ms.* in relation to the rhetorical functions of consciousness-raising as theorized by the Second Wave and contemporary criticisms of Second Wave consciousness-raising as raised by Third Wave theorists. I conclude that the *Ms.*-reader dialectic both reified and challenged various traditional Second Wave notions of consciousness-raising. Importantly, *Ms.* bridged the years between the Second and Third Waves of feminist discourse in the United States and survived. The mediated nature of *Ms.* improved the durability and applicability of the conscious-raising for the readers of the magazine. Additionally, many of the editorial choices inspired reader loyalty which made *Ms.*' survival possible because it functioned to promote lasting social change among individuals who engaged the magazine.

Second Wave Theories of Consciousness-Raising

Originally conceptualized by Kathie Sarachild, a member of the New York Radical Women in 1968 (Dreifus, 1973), consciousness-raising caught on as a feminist method in the early 1970's. Consciousness-raising has been described as allowing the women's movement to "employ the most revolutionary weapon of all: self-understanding" (Dreifus, 1973, p. 6). It involves women meeting in small groups to examine their lives in relation to culturally dictated roles and norms. *Ms.* described consciousness-raising as "gatherings" where women "are free to search out new solutions, new identities, and new techniques" in a quest to "discover and sustain each other and our selves" (*Ms.*, 1972b, p. 18). A 1973 how-to manual defines consciousness-raising as "the exploration of individual oppression through examining cultural, social, sexual, and religious roles with the options of keeping some roles, dropping others, and modifying still other roles in an effort to increase personal functioning and potential" (Sorensen & Cudlipp, 1973, p. 5). From a rhetorical perspective Campbell states,

Feminists believe that sharing personal experience is liberating . . . because all women, whatever their differences . . . share a common condition, a radical form of "consubstantiality" that is the genesis of the peculiar kind of identification they call "sisterhood." (Campbell, K. K., 1999, p. 84)

The sisterhood created through consciousness-raising is "recognition of pervasive, common experience . . . the most radical and profound basis for cooperation and

identification” (Campbell K. K., 1999, p. 84). In sum, consciousness-raising allows women to own and understand their experiences as a common group, as women in a sexist society.

In identifying consciousness-raising as “the major new organizational form, theory of knowledge, and research tool of the women’s liberation movement,” Baxandall & Gordon (2007, p. 67) elucidate two major assumptions of consciousness-raising as a feminist method. First, consciousness-raising assumes that “women were the experts on their own experience-as opposed to professionals such as doctors, psychologists, and religious leaders” (Baxandall & Gordon, 2000, p. 67). Positing women as the primary source of knowledge means that consciousness-raising is an epistemological method of truth discovery. The Gainesville Women’s Liberation document also echoes this theme. It states,

THIS IS HOW WE GET TO THE TRUTH. So many lies have been written and spoken about women that we look to ourselves to find out what is really true about us. We try to discover what we really think and feel . . . instead of what we know we’re expected to think or feel. (2000, p. 70)

Consciousness-raising is, therefore, designed to “test the accuracy of what any of the books said” about women’s lives “starting with the full reality of one’s own” (Sarachild, 1978).

Second, consciousness-raising assumes that “feminist theory could only arise from the daily lives of women” (Baxandall & Gordon, 2000, p. 67). In this view,

dialectic interaction between women is the foundation of all feminist knowledge and theorizing. Campbell states that “the centrality of consciousness-raising as a discursive mode in women’s practice” relies on the notion of “an epistemic stance based on shared experience” (Campbell K. K., 2002, pp. 59-60). The intended result of such discursive theorizing is to “prompt people to organize on a mass scale” and make those who participate “better fighters on behalf of women as a whole” (Sarachild, 1978, p. 144). Thus, consciousness-raising developed as a method for developing feminist epistemology and programs for action.

Several sets of guidelines for the practice of consciousness-raising were developed proposing approaches and rules for the conduct of these small group interactions (Allen, 2000; Dreifus, 1973; Gainesville Women's Liberation, 2000; *Ms.*, 1972b; Sarachild, 1970; Sorensen & Cudlipp, 1973; Women's Collective, early 1970s). Guidelines varied only slightly among the different authors and were intended to be adapted to particular situations. Overall, there was nearly total agreement on a set of common characteristics. These characteristics include: 1. Consciousness-raising is a small group process; 2. Groups should not create an unequal financial impact on participants; 3. Participants should focus on the sharing of personal experiences in order to understand and discover experiences that all women share; 4. Participants should not judge one another; 5. Including and listening to all participant’s voices is a primary value; and 6. Privacy and confidentiality should be ensured among group participants (Allen, 2000; Dreifus, 1973; Gainesville Women's Liberation, 2000; *Ms.*, 1972b; Sarachild, 1970; Sorensen & Cudlipp, 1973;

Women's Collective, early 1970s). In addition, most guides recommended that: 7. Consciousness-raising groups should be leaderless; and 8. Men should not be allowed (Allen, 2000; Dreifus, 1973; Gainesville Women's Liberation, 2000; *Ms.*, 1972b; Sarachild, 1970; Women's Collective, early 1970s). Thus, consciousness-raising groups in the second wave were small groups of women talking together in an attempt to understand and influence the world around them while placing a primary value on equality among the participants.

Limitations of Small Group Consciousness-Raising

While there is no doubt that consciousness-raising is one of the primary instruments used by second wave feminists, critics have suggested that these leaderless groups have shortcomings. Indictments of second wave blue prints for consciousness-raising include methodological and epistemic concerns. Methodologically, consciousness-raising has been indicted as an ineffective political instrument. Epistemologically, it has been challenged because critics suggest it defines women as a narrow and exclusive category.

Initially, doubts about the methods employed in consciousness-raising groups include concerns about the structureless leadership and rules involved in the groups themselves. Freeman argued that the “myth of structurelessness” actually gave way to an informal structure which meant there could be “no attempt to put limits on the use of power” (Freeman, 2000, p. 74). The attempts to eliminate power over others actually resulted in “sorority” like decision making processes in which “people listen to others because they like them, not because they say significant things” (Freeman,

2000, p. 74). Freeman argues that eliminating leadership structure “becomes a smokescreen for the strong or lucky to establish unquestioned hegemony over the others” (Freeman, 2000, p. 74). In this case, informal structure “becomes a way of masking power” with attendant unintentional political effects (Freeman, 2000, p. 74).

This informal structure inhibits the group in two important ways. First, it hinders the “development” of the group beyond a “preliminary stage” preventing the group from accomplishing “significant things” (Freeman, 2000, p. 74). Second, informal elitist structures essentially hide the power dynamics because those in power have influence without obligation to the group. Freeman describes such elites,

Their power was not given to them; it cannot be taken away. Their influence is not based on what they do for the group; therefore they cannot be directly influenced by the group. This does not necessarily make informal structures irresponsible The group simply cannot compel such responsibility; it is dependant on the interests of the elite. (Freeman, 2000, p. 74)

One example of such group dynamics gone wrong can be found in the story of a consciousness-raising group experience recounted by Sally Arnold. In this group, the elite was made up of the members of the group who faced the most personal challenges. Arnold states, “The weak tended to mainpulate the strong. People who cope don’t command as much attention as people who scream about their inability to cope” (Arnold, 1977, p. 108). Arnold remembers one particular woman who claimed to be having an affair with Arnold’s estranged husband. She recounts,

Every time I talk about him, she cries. I'm about to divorce him because I can't stand the pain of living with him; she weeps. After five minutes . . . my husband's lover noisily leaves the room, overturning a chair . . . goes to the bathroom, and vomits. Everybody can hear her. Everybody is meant to hear her. Cold-water packs, offers of sympathy are brought to the vomiter-who has chosen the most effective way of silencing me that I can think of She has turned her weakness to her own advantage; eight or nine competent women are manipulated Six months later she is to announce . . . that she never had an affair with my husband. (Arnold, 1977, p. 101)

In this case, the weakest members of the group became the informal elite through manipulation ultimately making the author feel silenced.

Another concern about consciousness-raising as a method emerged in practical application of rules requiring members to be non-judgmental. In Arnold's experience, being nonjudgmental, meant two things. First, "It's bad to be analytical" (Arnold, 1977, p. 101). Thus, Arnold's group focused much more on individual interests and experiences than on the interests of the group as a whole or the broader movement. In applying their nonjudgmental, anti-analytic schema, the group was hindered from political theorizing. In this case, the methodological flaws directly influenced the lack of epistemological development in the group. Arnold states, "Those of us who were trying to work out a political-feminist-economic analysis were accused of behaving like men-speaking . . . from our heads rather than our guts"

(Arnold, 1977, p. 103). In this specific example, Arnold highlights a very real political limitation imposed by disallowing judgement to enter into the group process. Indeed, “the tendency to think of consciousness-raising groups as ‘safe’ spaces undermines the possibilities of creating the necessarily risky but potentially productive openings in these groups that would be required to create effective and deep coalitions” (Keating, 2005, p. 93). Keating suggests that the attempt to be non-judgmental “rests on the notion that feminist solidarity should be both comfortable and comforting” when it should actually be a space where participants risk “profound discomfort” in order to build more effective coalitions (Keating, 2005, pp. 93-94).

The second problem with disallowing judgment was that it encouraged group members to be “duplicious” with one another because some amount of judgement is inevitable (Arnold, 1977, p. 101). In a forum where judgments could not be made publically, they were made privately. Arnold recalls, “As soon as we returned from meetings telephones began to hum. Direct confrontations were not allowed; but nothing prevented us from rehashing offenses with our intimates” (Arnold, 1977, p. 101). In fact, Arnold suggests that “all that stuff about being non-judgmental” was “bullshit” (Arnold, 1977, p. 101) as proven by group members’ inability to restrict their judgmental gossip about one another.

Despite the organizational weaknesses of the group, Arnold felt that it was a growing experience. She states, “It was a way for us to take ourselves seriously” (Arnold, 1977, p. 108). While group members grew personally, the group itself, like many others was not a coherent forum for political action. Indeed, lack of political

efficacy is the third criticism of consciousness-raising as a feminist method.

Freeman identifies this weakness, “unstructured groups may be very effective in getting women to talk about their lives; they aren’t very good for getting things done” (Freeman, 2000, p. 75). Robson explains,

Although many feminists posited the slogan "the personal is political" as a retort to . . . nonfeminists who interpreted consciousness-raising as simply personal therapy, some feminists themselves expressed doubts as to the relationship between relating personal incidents and the achievement of political solutions. (Robson, 1997, p. 1393)

Indeed, “personalized solutions that do not challenge the structures and institutions of society are ineffective” (Greene, 1991, p. 564). Therefore, consciousness-raising, as traditionally practiced in many cases focused on personal growth and lacked coherent methodological prescriptions for activism.

The epistemological indictments of consciousness-raising are equally important because the knowledge generated in consciousness-raising groups has been used as the basis for feminist theorizing accross the spectrum of political and social issues. The primary criticism of knowledge derived from consciousness-raising is the emphasis on commonality in the female experience. Robson explains that consciousness-raising provided no program for dealing with contradictions in epistemic claims, “Consciousness-raising possesses a fundamental flaw-the inability to account for women who experienced their own experiences as different from the political "truth" being proffered by others” (Robson, 1997, p. 1393). Thus,

emphasis on commonality can result in exclusion in and between groups of women which limits the epistemological significance of conclusions drawn based on such theorizing.

Indeed, the concept of “sisterhood” promoted in connection with consciousness-raising “has proved false for many . . . women are diverse, and their social, religious, ethnic, historical differences cannot be homogenized under the rubric of sisterhood” (Campbell K. K., 1999). Sowards and Renegar highlight the “perceived exclusivity in second wave feminism . . . [which] . . . has been critiqued as a predominately white, middle-class phenomenon that failed to speak to the experiences of women of color, the working class, and other marginalized individuals” (Sowards & Renegar, 2004, p. 540). Whether intentional or not, the second wave consciousness-raising methods “came chiefly from white, western women,” while the experiences of women of color “remained marginalized. Their particular voices, stories and perspective were missing” (Asher, 2003, p. 44+). In part perceptions of exclusivity may have been because “consciousness-raising groups may have had their strongest impact on women who were sufficiently similar in class and ethnic background and who could recognize their lives in the lives of other group members” (Cain, 1991, p. 25).

The focus on the white middle class calls into question epistemic truth claims created in consciousness-raising processes and this may have limited the ability of feminists to engage in coalitional politics. Keating explains,

By failing to incorporate close attention to racial, class, sexual, national, and other differences and the unequal power dynamics among women themselves that have been linked to those differences in feminist analysis and practice, the movement failed to build or sustain long standing feminist coalitions across lines of race, class, sexuality, and nationality. (Keating, 2005, p. 91)

According to these critics, attempts to create truth through identifying commonalities among women creates woman as a “unified category” (Keating, 2005, p. 92) implying that certain experiences are universal to all women thereby denying the validity of different approaches or situated knowledges.

However, both the methodological and epistemological criticisms of consciousness-raising rely on relatively static and closed notions of its methodology and assumptions. In fact, Sarachild criticizes the “dogma . . . that has grown up around consciousness-raising” (Sarachild, 1978, pp. 144-150). She suggests that the beauty and power of consciousness-raising is its ability to change. According to Sarachild, “new knowledge is the source of consciousness-raising’s strength and power. Methods are simply to serve this purpose, to be changed if they aren’t working” (Sarachild, 1978, pp. 144-150). Based on the idea that consciousness-raising is an open system, I use the remainder of this chapter to sketch a theory of mediated consciousness-raising and argue that the letters in *Ms.* magazine functioned as an example of this rhetorical form. I conclude that the *Ms.* letters created a virtual

consciousness-raising group that avoided many of the traps traditionally associated with small group consciousness-raising as a feminist method.

Mediated Consciousness-Raising: An Emergent Theory

The letters printed in *Ms.* magazine during the first five years functioned as a mediated consciousness-raising group which avoided the traps traditionally associated with small group consciousness-raising sessions. In other words, the *Ms.* letters typified the notion of consciousness-raising as an open methodology because they maintained the most important and positive functions of consciousness-raising, while adding new functional aspects that were compensatory to problems that have been identified with traditional consciousness-raising groups. *Ms.*' use of mediated consciousness-raising foreshadowed mediated consciousness-raising practices that have emerged in the third wave (Sowards & Renegar, 2004, pp. 543-4). In this section of the chapter, I examine the letters to *Ms.* and propose a functional explanation of the methodological and epistemological aspects of mediated consciousness-raising as typified in the magazine. Finally, I argue that mediated consciousness-raising in *Ms.* functioned in a way that avoided the weaknesses associated with traditional small group consciousness-raising.

Initially, mediated consciousness-raising as typified by the letters section in *Ms.* functioned to empower women and men "to lead the lives they want to lead" (Reger, 2004, p. 211). Mediated consciousness-raising shared many functional characteristics of traditional small group consciousness-raising session. Writers focused on sharing personal experiences and stories to better explain and theorize the

place of women in a sexist society; the editors attempted to publish a wide range of letters; and, assured privacy and confidentiality to participants when requested.

While there were many similarities between the two forms of consciousness-raising, mediated consciousness-raising was more open than traditional small group approaches. The functional characteristics of mediated consciousness-raising exemplified in *Ms.* include: 1. Mediated consciousness-raising created identification between participants but did not reduce participants to a single, universalized notion of “woman.” Instead, it allowed for sharing many personal stories from many different women, creating a broader sense of consubstantiality among participants; 2. It embraced a leadership structure while preserving each person’s voice and right to speak. In mediated consciousness-raising groups, leaders could not manipulate the group; 3. Mediated consciousness-raising provided a consistent structure allowing readers to express themselves in a predictable and safe environment and encouraging debate and discussion of conflicting ideas; 4. Mediated consciousness-raising also allowed everyone to participate through both reading and writing letters, regardless of whether a particular letter was published. Indeed, mediated consciousness-raising included diverse perspectives allowing men to participate and including a broad variety of female perspectives including lesbians and multiple racial groups. Including a variety of perspectives functioned to allow other participants to gain a greater, more nuanced understanding of both similar and differing perspectives; 5. Finally, mediated consciousness-raising groups encouraged participants to move beyond self reflection and to engage in political action.

First, mediated consciousness-raising created identification between participants but did not reduce participants to a single, universalized notion of “woman.” Instead, it allowed for sharing many personal stories from many different women, creating a broader sense of consubstantiality among participants. From the beginning, the editorial policy of *Ms.* included making it a “forum for many views” in which the readers and the magazine staff could “explore this new world” and “learn from each other” (*Ms.*, 1972a, p. 7). In fact, the first editorial statement ended with a plea for women to “keep writing” because “*Ms.* belongs to us all” (*Ms.*, 1972a, p. 7). The readers took that appeal seriously and the magazine staff provided the space for discussion. *Ms.* received “on average 200 letters per month, a much larger number than periodicals with comparative, or even much bigger, circulations” (Farrell, 1998, p. 152). This indicates that readers were participating, that everyone could share his or her story whether or not it was published in the magazine.

Mediated consciousness-raising created a forum where some generic types of letters were shared and served to create high levels of identification between the readers and the magazine and among the readers themselves. These generic types of letters included the letters which shared personal experience and stories. These letters were often identified with the term “click!” which functioned enthymematically to allow reader participation in the letter writer’s personal story. The second type of letter that served to promote broad identification was the ownership/thank you letter which claimed intellectual ownership of the magazine. Each of these types of letters allowed readers to share personal experiences that fostered identification with other

women and with the magazine itself. The sheer number and variety of perspectives presented belied the notion of a universalized “woman” instead validating a diverse range of personal stories and experiences. Understanding other women’s experience allowed readers to understand and cope with sexism in their own lives.

Identification was exemplified through a series of “Click!” letters in which moments of personal consciousness-raising were identified with the term click.

Each of these “click” letters provided an inductive example of sexism and the term “click” leaving the readers to fill in the explanations.

This heightened level of participation forced readers to employ reason and empathy, to participate in the rhetorical persuasive process.

(Partlow & Rowland, 2001, p. 20)

The enthymematic nature of these shared experiences allowed readers to participate in “interactive truth creation” constructing ideas about their place in society as they participated in drawing the intended conclusion (Partlow & Rowland, 2001, p. 19).

In this way, letter writers shared their experiences of coming to understanding about the nature and personal impact of sexism in American society.

Using the term “click!” signaled the enthymematic nature of the story, inviting readers to supply the reasoning behind the moment of illumination and to examine the story as it related to their lives. For example, one writer stated, “For my 19 years, I have sure clicked a lot. For my birthday I asked my father for a subscription to your magazine; instead, I received a subscription to Seventeen (which I haven’t read since

I was 15!)” (Neiffemann, 1972, p. 6). In the November, 1972 issue, one reader recounts a moment of feminist awakening,

Early in the morning, my husband (6 feet, 180 lbs. of pure chauvinism) emerged from the shower bellowing for his boxer shorts. The underwear was the sole object on an immense table in front of him; having pointed this out to his, I started back to bed only to be stopped by an indignant accusation of having sewn his fly shut (he had them on backward). Click! (Frantz, 1972, p. 7)

Letters also incorporated both women and men in their experiences of awakening to sexism. One example appears in the October 1973 issue and describes the way that sexist assumptions impact both women and men,

My husband hosted at our home a meeting of the board of directors of the nursery school our daughter attends. The business session was followed by a social time, and my husband had prepared quite an elaborate spread of food and drink. I was not home during the evening, but I have been thanked several times since for the nice evening. That’s two Clicks! One for me and one for my husband. (Leonard, p. 4)

Each writer of a “Click!” letter felt compelled to share a personal story with the feminist community as embodied by *Ms.* magazine. This sharing functioned to create wide swaths of identification fulfilling the most basic story sharing function of

traditional consciousness-raising among the members of *Ms.*, a mediated consciousness-raising group.

The second type of letter that highlights the consciousness-raising function of *Ms.* and exposes high levels of identification between the readers and the magazine was the ownership/thank you letter. These letters created a direct connection between the reader's lives and the magazine by expressing a feeling of ownership for the magazine, thanking the magazine for its involvement in the readers' lives, endowing the magazine with feminist credentials as a reference and guidebook and creating the magazine's persona as sister who was offering support to readers.

Readers expressed ownership of the magazine quite literally as one reader wrote in the October 1972 issue, "I must admit that I approached your (rather, our) publication with some degree of trepidation" (Winfrey, 1972, p. 8). Another expression of direct ownership feelings toward the magazine can be seen in the following letter as one reader ends her thank you to the magazine with strong expectations. She writes,

I've been approaching my thirty-fourth birthday in sheer panic I hadn't done anything worthwhile with my 34 years, and with no plans for the future Then I read my first issue of *Ms.* I read it straight through from front to back and afterward, I had a whole new idea of myself. I did not feel patronized, guilty, or cheated, as with every other women's magazine on the stands I had simply been appealed to on my own level on subjects that interested me, in a style

that assumed my dignity as a human being without making a thing of it. This is powerful stuff, ladies, I'll never be the same again nor satisfied with less. (Watson, 1973, pp. 4-5)

The identification engendered by *Ms.* also served as a remedy to geographical and political isolation. One reader wrote, "I am a female in Texas and I could write a book about being a non entity The thoughts you expressed were exactly like mine." (Name withheld, Texas, 1972, p. 8). Another example focuses on the reader's ability to create empathetic understanding of others who had ideological perspectives on the world,

My daughter . . . introduced me to *Ms.* It is difficult to express the sense of exhilaration I experienced upon finding in print the ideas that have been smoldering in my semi-rebellious soul for some 40 years. It is comforting to know one is not alone. (Schramm, 1972, p. 7)

As the above letter indicates, the mediated consciousness-raising function served through interaction with the magazine also remedied isolation and gave readers hope for a better world. Readers also felt less isolation as they identified with the stories of women published in the text of magazine, "I am very happy *Ms.* is publishing excerpts from the diaries of women. So many women secretly keep diaries about their lives, thoughts and feelings. Sharing them can be of inestimable value since so many women are strangled by their feelings and the belief that they are alone" (Brennan, 1976, p. 5).

In some cases, the magazine was the primary contact between women and Women's Liberation. For example,

Help! Doesn't anybody remember what it is like to be 14 and female in a small town? My school is against me . . . any girl who even talks about Women's Liberation is a tomboy My father read the first issue of *Ms.* and said: "Don't waste your time and money on this junk; Women's Lib is just a fad. Women can never be equal to men, they just aren't capable of it." Nevertheless, I have kept every issue (hidden in my dresser under my padded bras). Please print my letter just to assure me there is a world outside of Millburn! (Name withheld, Millburn, N.J., 1973, p. 6)

Readers were very aware of their isolation as women and *Ms.* served to lessen those feelings and validate their experiences. One reader wrote,

I know I share my troubles with all women who are involved in any way with the Women's Movement – loneliness, frustration, isolation, and so on. Isolation is the worst enemy for me *Ms.* combats that enemy. Reading some of the articles . . . I felt as though I were reading my own hypothetical diary. *Ms.* will give us all a chance for some healthy communication with each other. (Salem, 1972, p. 4)

While some expressed a lessening of feelings of isolation, others expressed the seeds of hope that had been planted by the individual reader's interaction with the magazine. One reader explains,

I started out as a fairly liberated young woman. Became a secretary with the pure hatred of any boss wanting to have his office vacuumed or dusted. Became a wife who went to work and cleaned and cooked and laundered and ironed and whose brain was constantly Click! Click! Clicking! To hell with this, I said. Why share his job when he wouldn't share mine? I gave up work and stayed home to play the housewife and promptly became disastrously bored and depressed and nearly divorced. I had lost myself. I was a nobody. He couldn't love a domestic servant. He wanted a whole person. I wanted to be a whole person. To fulfill my own life. (Needless to say we didn't get the roles we were playing.) We decided on some sort of an equal partnership, and I'm going to begin college come September. Well, I was a little scared, and the whole idea was still a little fuzzy. I was just beginning to get myself together when I bought *Ms.* It was like an explosion. Suddenly I came fully to my senses. It was an awakening of the person within me I finally realized that there wasn't something wrong with me, that I wasn't the only one who felt the way I did, and that there is an answer. (Name withheld, 1972a, p. 45)

As the examples illustrate, *Ms.* served a mediated consciousness-raising function. *Ms.* was able to create understanding of sexism as a type of discrimination and to help readers to understand the impacts of sexism in their own lives and in relation to their individual stories.

The feelings associated with interacting with *Ms.* were so strong that some women or groups of women posited *Ms.* as a feminist guidebook which was used to start their new consciousness-raising groups and as guidebook for individuals trying to change their lives. Some readers expressed extreme loyalty to the magazine. One woman writes, “*Ms.* was the most exciting literary event of my adult life, and I immediately started calling myself by the title *Ms.* If it were feasible, I would have the issue gold plated” (Hillard, 1972, pp. 7-8). Another woman quipped, “Once a month I receive your magazine and am impressed, delighted, informed, educated, amused, beguiled, stimulated, and proud to be a woman. But, what do I do on the other 29 days?” (Lepre, 1972, p. 8). Other individuals and groups began to use the magazine as a guidebook. In 1973, Schwartz wrote, “Your magazine has become almost a bible of my faith in my own voice” (p. 5). The impact of *Ms.* was even felt by women living abroad,

As a new . . . chapter of NOW here in Paris, we appreciated your article on consciousness-raising We are using it as a basis for our groups We are anxious to work together to alleviate the personal isolation women feel when living abroad This is where your magazine is an extra special asset to us. We pass copies around, hungrily, from one to another- in essence it has become our Bible As we continue to try and work with our sisters here in France and also maintain our own goals and identity, we will continue to read “our” great magazine *Ms.*! (Canja, 1973, p. 7)

Finally, the stories that readers chose to share were highly private in a manner similar to those shared in traditional consciousness-raising forums. Typical of these detailed personal accounts, the following example describes a woman's experience of having an illegal abortion,

I do not like children. I see no reason to have one simply because I have a womb. I resent the Right-to-Life movement people because if they got their way and my present method of birth control failed, I would be forced to seek an illegal abortion.

My first and only abortion took place illegally seven years ago on a dining room table. It was done without anesthesia. I was one of the "lucky" ones because my abortionist really was a doctor, and I received medicine to counteract possible infection. But, the physical pain of my abortion was the worst I have ever endured. I could not scream because of the neighbors and the risk of being busted mid-procedure. When it was over, I straddled a waste paper basket as I walked to the bathroom to clean up while three strangers watched.

I am not a murderer. I am a gentle loving person who happens to know what is *not* her role in life and who thinks enough of her own life to do something about it. I have been on the pill ever since the abortion because my doctor will not tie my tubes. He says I am "too young" (27) and "you'll like children more when you have your own."

I think he is wrong, but I am not willing to have a child just to find out.

(Name withheld, 1976, p. 12)

Mediated consciousness-raising in *Ms.* preserved the desire of traditional notions of consciousness-raising to minimize the financial impact on participants. *Ms.* was available at libraries and some readers donated their magazines or sent money to make the magazine available to others. One man sent two checks for \$99: one to “help *Ms.*” and another to send free subscriptions to those who were not enlightened because he felt that “the best form of charity to get any worthwhile magazine going is to send the magazine to people who will talk about it and also genuinely need it” (McKuen, 1972, p. 4). Another reader pledged to “to donate” her “copy of *Ms.* to the college library each month.” (Name withheld, 1973, p. 7).

Additionally, the magazines were passed from hand to hand by those who read them. One reader had trouble getting her magazine back. She wrote,

I lent three issues to my daughter She lent them to her mother-in-law. When she asked for them back, her mother-in-law said she thought I didn’t want them. She had lent them to her next door neighbor and would get them back.

Too late, she discovered that her neighbor had sent them to her daughter in West Virginia, and she had lent them to her neighbor after reading.

Well, to make a long story short – the whole trip was reversed, and I finally got my treasured magazines. So when you count me as a

subscriber, you've missed a lot of additional readers. (Alexander, 1973, p. 4)

Another reader also wrote about this phenomena, "Frankly, *Ms.* is one of the few magazines that I've read cover to cover, and as soon as I put it down, my husband reads it. Your July issue was completely read by both of us in two days, and it's now starting the rounds of curious friends" (Cameron, 1972, p. 8). In each example, the magazine was shared among readers, increasing its total circulation and making the content available to those who were not subscribers or purchasers. Sharing *Ms.* allowed both individuals and groups to use the magazine. One reader explained the importance of *Ms.* both as a mediated form of consciousness-raising for individuals and as a tool in traditional consciousness-raising groups. She wrote,

I can't begin to tell you how welcome your magazine is here in the land of machismo. I have returned to my local supermarket four separate times for extra copies of *Ms.* My friends ask to borrow it, and I never see it again. At a local rap group session for NOW members, every woman spontaneously brought along her copy of *Ms.* We used it as a starting point, as a guide for discussion. (Hillard, 1972, p. 7)

In this case, *Ms.* literally bridged the gap between traditional notions of consciousness-raising and individuals participating with the magazine as a mediated form of consciousness-raising.

Ms. also moved beyond the limitations of traditional consciousness-raising because mediated consciousness-raising, as exemplified in *Ms.*, was not a small group

process, it mimicked that process while avoiding the insular nature of small group interactions. The sheer number of participants opened up the range of epistemological discovery offered by participation in the group. It offered many more perspectives than traditional consciousness-raising and still functioned as a relatively private and safe environment for the participants. Because it was mediated, it could function as a small group process for the readers. They could meet with their group of “sisters,” those who published letters each month and use the experiences recounted to better understand their own experiences. However, the forum also broadened their understanding of the many faceted concept of liberation by exposing participants to women with contradictory experiences based on things such as personal preference, race, age, gender and sexual orientation. The broad range of letters from many different people challenged notions of a primarily white, middleclass sisterhood.

Mediated consciousness-raising provided the ability to identify with and create shared understanding with others while respecting their differences. Letters of many, contradictory perspectives appeared in *Ms.* Black women and other women of color wrote from a variety of perspectives. Interestingly, these letters addressed the perceived exclusivity of the Women’s Liberation. Both the writers of the letters and the printing of such letters indicated a willingness to embrace a variety of perspectives and definitions of women. Some readers argued that women of color should be more involved in the Women’s Liberation Movement. Others thanked the magazine for representing multiple racial perspectives in its pages. Some called for

unity across difference to be developed between all women. For example, one reader wrote, "I agree that it is important for women to recognize our common experience of oppression crosses the lines of race, class, nationality, and so on, and that only through unity can that oppression be thrown off" (Morell, 1973, p. 6).

Initially, one reader wrote. "As a young black woman, I believe that at this time it is necessary that black women join, or in some way ally themselves with the Women's Liberation Movement. Women's liberation provides a strong power base by and through which black women can make strides, because Women's Liberation's goal is equally for all women." (Amaker, 1972, p. 6). Another reader wrote,

I am black and it distresses me that many of my black sisters do not identify with "Women's Lib." Many feel they are already liberated Also, many of my sisters feel that we must win racial equality first. I agree with these arguments. There is, however, another aspect that my sisters do not seem conscious of. That is the sexist, male-dominated attitude with which many black men approach black women Most of my black sisters never . . . realize that this is due to a male dominated society. (Wilson G. , 1972, p. 6)

This theme was echoed by a Chicana woman who wrote, "Being a Chicana did not detract from my enjoyment of your magazine We all stand on common ground, i.e., we are all women in a society where being female is inferior" (Maram, 1972, p. 42).

In another thematic vein, some readers thanked *Ms.* for their attempt to reach out to black women. One wrote,

I too am a beautiful black woman. And everything, from your letters on the National Black Feminist Organization (of which I am a proud member) to Lenore Davis's moving "Portfolio," made me glad that I am black and thankful that *Ms.* is trying to bridge, with knowledge, the gap of misunderstanding between us and our nonblack sisters My hand goes out, fisted and full of power and gratefulness, to all who had anything to do with this issue. It truly makes me proud that I am black and a woman. (Shepard, 1974, pp. 4,6)

Similarly, a Native American reader wrote to thank *Ms.* for its attention to her people. She said,

I was surprised and delighted with " 'We Will Remember' Survival School: The Women and Children of the American Indian Movement" (July, 1976). I am a Native American/Chicano background, and my thoughts on women's lives differ considerably from those expressed by the American Women's Movement. However, I appreciate *Ms.* because I see that you are aware of a powerful people who continue the ways of the Creation, and that you are spreading this awareness to your people. I hope you continue to travel the path you are on right now. I know it must be the right one. (Delgado, 1976, p. 5)

Rich wrote in response to a reader's letter written in response to her article. She discussed the need for additional deconstruction of racist stereotypes and knowledge of the interaction between sexist and racist stereotypical categorizations.

More needs to be known about the pressures on black women past and present, for and against motherhood, and the degree to which, like white women, they have been subjected to a "choice" between mothering and creative work . . . I can identify with *Ms.*

Washington's impatience with a stereotype-not simply a sexist stereotype-not simply the sexist stereotype of all women as mothers, but the racist stereotype of all women as mothers, but the racist sentimentalization of the black woman as mother of us all.

Black and white feminists alike need to explore that stereotype: it affects all our lives. (Rich, 1977, p. 7)

Printing letters from a variety of racial categories allowed mediated consciousness-raising to avoid the same level of insularity that plagued traditional consciousness-raising groups. The ability to read women's experiences across racial lines made the experience more inclusive and called upon women to identify similarities across difference. Rather than assuming all women were a singular category, media representations allowed women to better theorize the epistemic similarities and differences in women's experience. My argument here is not that *Ms.* successfully created a cross cultural community in the broader women's movement, instead they attempted to understand and to promote understanding of that diversity. Thus,

including multiple racial perspectives in the letters to the editor was a first step in bridging the gap between second and third wave feminist epistemological approaches to consciousness-raising.

Another identity category that *Ms.* included was lesbians. While *Ms.* often had a combative relationship with the lesbian community, the staff published both letters of praise and censure in an effort to create a multifaceted understanding of women's lives. This theme is echoed in the following letter,

Tonight I read with great interest Joan Larkin's article ("Coming out: My Story Is Not About All Lesbians . . ." March, 1976). My compliments to the author on a truly personal, moving piece of literature, and to *Ms.* for publishing it. It is a step in the right direction! If the feminist movement is to succeed, we must not let the powers of race, class barriers, and sexual oppression continue to divide us. I urge you to continue your efforts to represent our gay sisters and also to make *Ms.* a magazine that is relevant to the issues that all women face. (Leadley, 1976, p. 7)

The previous letter along with others called for a continued broad representation and definition of womanhood in the pages of *Ms.* Lesbians wrote to challenge the magazine to continue and broaden their representations of lesbians. One reader wrote,

I am very glad to see that *Ms.* magazine is finally dealing with lesbianism. I have been disappointed in the past by your failure to

acknowledge the lesbian lifestyle. Lesbianism is another form of women loving women. Lesbianism is not a practice to be ashamed of. Rather it is an option, and that is what Women's Liberation is all about – more options for women and all people. I almost cancelled my subscription due to *Ms.*' silence on the gay issue. Now, I am glad I didn't. (Reno, 1976, p. 8)

Another reader wrote, "Thanks for bringing us lesbians out of the closet-including the closet of tokenism With pride and warmth for all women, gay and straight, who are trying to find their own truth and live it, and help their sisters on the way, I am yours (and theirs)" (Mitchell, 1977, p. 7). Each of these letters identifies a need for unity across difference, a need for understanding of the multiple natures of identities. It also demonstrates that *Ms.* attempted to expand notions of womanhood, denying a singular, white, middle class focus.

Representing all faces of woman was necessary to create a more nuanced understanding of women and their place in society. In some cases, readers had access to new information that enhanced their ability to understand their lives. One reader wrote to thank *Ms.* for helping her redefine her understanding of her fundamental nature. She came to understand that she was a lesbian. She wrote,

My daughter was given a subscription to *Ms.* for Christmas by a friend. She was elated, of course, and I who had never even heard of *Ms.* could not understand her reaction. The magazine would stay on the kitchen table until she came home from

school. She would then take it to her room and read it. That would be all I'd see of it until the next issue came.

In October, she went away to college and as usual *Ms.* arrived. I put it aside along with her other mail.

Some time before Thanksgiving I was feeling very depressed and none of my needlework interested me.

I took out my daughter's *Ms.* and started thumbing through it. I did not put it down until I finished the last page. What a fool I've been, I thought; all those months I ignored *Ms.* completely. *Ms.* has awakened me from a long, long sleep. I am one of the many women who love another woman. This is a feeling I have suppressed for many, many years.

I was afraid and considered myself abnormal. I even married and had three lovely children. My marriage dissolved after sixteen years. The last seven years were spent in agony because I couldn't feel love for the man I married. Instead, I felt an almost unbearable love for a woman.

I have not "come out" as such, but I am more comfortable about my feelings now.

I have always hoped to for something to make me understand my feelings. Now little by little, I am learning to live the life I've always wanted.

Someday, I hope I will be proud to come out too.

(Name withheld, 1975, p. 10)

Representations of lesbianism in *Ms.* helped this woman to understand herself. Indeed, multiple representations of what it is to be a woman actually allowed this reader to broaden her definition of acceptable modes of womanhood. This reader's epistemological understanding of the range of normalcy in womanhood broadened enough to allow her to accept herself. In this case, mediated consciousness-raising as embodied in *Ms.* reached into an average woman's home and changed her life. This example demonstrates the ability of mediated consciousness-raising to overcome criticisms of traditional consciousness-raising. The presentation of a broad epistemology of womanhood and sisterhood in the pages of the magazine literally exploded the notions of feminism as merely a white, middle class, heterosexual movement. Instead, readers had contact with people and ideas from a broad range of perspectives and backgrounds. In this case, mediated consciousness-raising as exhibited in *Ms.* was more reflective of third wave notions of consciousness-raising than of the second wave.

This anonymous letter (Name withheld, 1975) also demonstrates the ability of mediated consciousness-raising to penetrate mainstream society. Traditional consciousness-raising required women to be aware of, to have access to, and to have enough personal freedom to attend a consciousness-raising group. *Ms.* did not require that. As the letter explains, the writer read *Ms.* almost by accident, because she was bored. Traditional consciousness-raising would never have reached this reader. The

mediated form also guaranteed anonymity for those who chose to withhold their names. Mediated consciousness-raising allowed women who had little or no familial support for feminist ideas or access to traditional consciousness-raising to participate privately (Name withheld, Texas, 1972; Name withheld, Millburn, N.J., 1973). This ability to question societal norms without enduring personal risk may have been a key element in the participation of non-activist women. In these cases, mediated consciousness-raising may have had a greater personal impact for those who participated because it was their only or initial access to the women's liberation movement.

Another group which was isolated from traditional consciousness-raising and access to information about women's liberation was men. Traditional consciousness-raising guidelines stated that men should not be allowed to participate (Allen, 2000; Dreifus, 1973; Gainesville Women's Liberation, 2000; *Ms.*, 1972b; Sarachild, 1970; Women's Collective, early 1970s). While there may have been legitimate reasons to exclude men from face to face consciousness-raising sessions, these reasons were not valid in a mediated forum. Undeniably, it would have been impossible to exclude men had that been the goal because anyone could read the magazine and could thus have access to the information and views within. However, I argue that including men was a positive effect of mediated consciousness-raising. Because the consciousness-raising was mediated, men were disembodied, separated from what might have been seen as the negative aspects of their gender. This allowed them to participate without posing any type of physical or psychological threat to other

participants. Most male participants were sympathetic with the cause. And, the magazine allowed them to understand the ideas of women's liberation in a non-stereotyped way, as insiders rather than outsiders. Men's participation broadened the range of opinions expressed and allowed their consciousness to be raised too. This broader swath of persuasion is the key to broader social change. In other words, since men make up a large part of the population, failure to reach them with a persuasive message makes social change much more difficult to obtain. Even men who were not sympathetic empowered the women in the group because they became powerless sexist tropes to be fought against by the collective. In this section, I examine letters from both sympathetic men and die hard sexists to illustrate the diversity and import of their participation in *Ms.* magazine's letters section as a mediated consciousness-raising forum.

First, the mediated nature of *Ms.* not only broadened the Women's Liberation audience, it also gave men a chance to express themselves and participate with the movement. One expression of this participation was that of solidarity or support. Men wrote letters to express their agreement with the goals and ideals of Women's Liberation. For example one male reader wrote, "The cause of Women's Liberation is really the cause of liberating both men and women from stereotyping. I hope that your magazine can convey this so the ERA can become a reality before our species goes the way of the dinosaur" (Paulson, 1976, p. 8). Through reading *Ms.*, male readers came to understand the nature of the problems identified by Women's

Liberation. It also allowed men to express a desire to be included. Another reader wrote,

After reading Volume 1, Number 1, I can plainly see that there is a problem. And that this problem isn't new . . . But, what can be done? Perhaps you started the solution. *Ms.*, in combining humor, the arts, and the news fronts and how they relate to women, looks at the problem rationally, so everyone can see it (even us male chauvinist pigs). (Wodka, 1972, p. 4)

Understanding also lead to expressions of solidarity. In 1972, one reader wrote to acknowledge the social pressure that men faced and to call for change,

You have a good magazine that should not be read by women only. I have been a practicing sexist for most of my life . . . We men are mostly a hypocritical lot, subject to pressures which directly affect us as individuals. Some of us, though, are tired of the deception and practical decisions which drive us into isolation. (A reader, New York, N.Y., 1972, p. 4)

In the same way that *Ms.* helped some Lesbian readers to come out of the closet, it allowed men to begin the process of attempting to escape their sex role stereotypes and to realize the constraining nature of those stereotypes for both sexes. One reader illustrated this as he wrote, "Men need encouragement, too-to come out from behind their sex defined masks. I hope M.F. continues to write for *Ms.* It is so encouraging

to hear a man express these feelings” (Beck E. , 1972, p. 5). Another reader expanded on these themes. He wrote,

Ostensibly, you are writing for the restoration of a valid female image and identity. But, I think it cannot be overemphasized that you are doing a double service. You are also helping to clarify male identity for the type of fellow . . . who is looking for a genuinely truthful interpersonal relationship The more you do to aid and abet women to come to a true sense of selfhood, the more you will help genuine men to relate to them and to one another. (Moulton, 1972, p. 6)

Most letters written by men expressed some level of having their consciousness raised and engaging in examination of both themselves and their sex roles. For example, one man wrote,

I have just finished reading most of your new magazine and find myself stunned by my phoniness. I like to think of myself as a liberal, perfectly willing to fight for women’s rights, but I guess I never really believed your rights were the same as mine Hopefully your magazine will do more than raise the consciousness of women I know . . . that it has raised my consciousness. (Barbieri, 1972, p. 6)

As increased understanding caused men to examine their lives and gender roles, it also allowed them to move toward personal empowerment and challenging of sex role stereotypes. One man wrote,

I am not male. You are not females. We are individuals. Of course, we are pervasively influenced by the role society dictates for us. But, as free agents, we need not act out those roles in docile subservience. We can write our own scripts. (McBain, 1973, p. 5)

Just as women saw new hope in liberation, so did men. One reader wrote,

I see very little in the news these days to cheer me up or give me hope for our country and civilization, but the rapid growth of your magazine, and, by implication, of the Movement for which it (in part) speaks, is one of the bright signs. (Holt, 1973, p. 7)

Reader response also indicated that both men and women were applying the lessons they had learned to their individual lives. With raised consciousnesses and the knowledge that it was acceptable for both men and women to challenge sex role stereotypes, men began to examine their own lives. For example, one reader wrote to share his experience of embracing emotions. He wrote,

How does a man free himself of a society that denies him the right to feel? I was brought up not to be sensitive and not to get emotional over very emotional situations. I find myself apologizing for showing my sensitivity toward others. I've been told that I have some traits that are female by nature, for example, crying in front of a woman. I care for her so much and I don't want to see her destroyed by liquor. What she said to me was, "Be a man, don't cry." What is a person to do? Why it

is that the male of the species is denied the right to feel? (Giltner, 1973, p. 7)

The above example illustrates that sex role stereotypes are sometimes enforced by women and challenged by men. This among other examples suggests that at least some readers believed that sex role stereotypes could be equally problematic for men. Additionally, this letter suggests that breaking down sex role stereotypes must be done by both men and women to free both men and women from the crippling shackles of problematic social norms. One woman wrote to give an example of one change she and her husband had made in their lives. She said, “My husband and I both work full time and have two school-age children. After reading a few issues of *Ms.*, we decided to share the housework” (Blackman, 1973, p. 8). Another reader expressed the sense of freedom he felt after reading *Ms.* He said, “Within a complex of causes, *Ms.* has helped direct my attention to the personalities of women and away from their sex. I appreciate this. It is giving me a freedom I lost as child” (Vaughn, 1976, p. 12). Both of these examples illustrate that *Ms.*’ empowering function extended to men in turn empowering women.

Consciousness and individual change could be identified as precursors to political action and involvement in Women’s Liberation. One male reader wrote,

I believe a significant number of men have now reached a very high level of consciousness, political involvement, and commitment to the feminist movement. I also believe the Movement has reached a degree of autonomy that will allow the introduction of men into a larger role .

. . . a visible one as opposed to the “invisible” one in which men had to sit sheepishly by when “men” and the masculinist mentality are under fire. The Women’s Movement has become too important to male feminists, on a personal and political level for them to be bulldozed out of at least ideological participation. (Ward, 1975, p. 8)

Thus, male participation in mediated consciousness-raising through reading *Ms.* magazine became a basis for men to promote broader male inclusion in women’s liberation.

Inclusion of men was also one example of including judgment as a legitimate aspect of mediated consciousness-raising. In a mediated forum, judgment was allowed and encouraged. It worked to ameliorate the negative effects of backbiting and gossip common to traditional consciousness-raising groups (Arnold, 1977, p. 101). Because people participated through letter writing, they were distanced from others. The lack of interpersonal relationships between the participants made judgment and argument more acceptable than in traditional groups. Mediated argument allowed for reasoned debate among the readers and criticisms of the magazine. To be specific, judgment became analytical rather than confrontational. For example, in the letters section, judgment was rendered against those who wrote letters that were deemed to be sexist. Editors chose to publish some letters that served as rallying points for other readers to judge as the sexist other. In this way, the mediated nature of consciousness-raising in *Ms.* allowed readers to analyze the roles they were attempting to challenge.

Some letters the editors chose to publish were clearly meant to allow readers to judge the content of the letters and the writers themselves. For example, one reader was a priest who objected to one particular article but claimed to be sympathetic to the cause of Women's Liberation. This reader actually suggested that the staff deserved to be beaten. He wrote,

Women in this country might have some legitimate gripes that deserve an airing, but it is the height of irresponsibility for anyone to print the kind of bilge you published in this particular instance If this is the example of what you call responsible journalism I suggest that your entire staff try to find husbands who can beat some sense into your heads. (Hirsch, 1976, pp. 7-8)

In response, another reader indicted his reasoning and called for women to seek official censure against the priest.

While Reverend Hirsch has a right to object to material printed by *Ms.*, his manner of expressing these objections is offensive and inexcusable for a priest. Wife-beating, the brutalization of one human being by another, should be abhorred by any person professing to live by Christian principles yet there is a priest not only condoning but recommending it!

I hope the women of his parish call his letter to the attention of the diocese's bishop. Hirsch's comments and the attitude they indicate are certainly worthy of official censure. (Edwards-Jordan, 1977, p. 4)

Another reader noted her disapproval,

I have always held Catholic scholarship in high regard. Reverend Harold L. Hirsch's comments . . . shattered the respect I felt. I pity the women in Reverend Hirsch's congregation. Woe to the battered wife who seeks his aid if he feels violence is the answer to a difference of opinion! (Cunningham, J. A., 1977, p. 4)

While this exchange was relatively brief, there were more lengthy exchanges which played out in the letters section over the course of months.

Apparently, some sexists sent purposefully offensive letters to the magazine. The editors chose to publish some of these letters which allowed the readers to judge for themselves and reminded the readers of ongoing sexist attitudes. One letter writer described his family's actions in opposition to Women's Liberation. He wrote,

I thought I would take a few minutes out of my busy schedule to write this letter. Then perhaps you can get a better picture of what you're up against and what other people really think of about your opinions.

First, I would like to state that I am a father of three girls ages six, four, and two. Also, my wife shares my thoughts and ideals. You feminists all seem to think that you are hurting men's feelings or insulting the by calling them male chauvinist pigs. I would like to state that the greatest honor anyone can give me is to call me a male chauvinist pig. I'd consider it a great honor to teach my girls that all feminist women are "lesbians." I drill this into their heads so that the

schools, churches, and their friends cannot set their futures on the wrong path. You always talk of what women can do to help Women's Lib. I would like to tell you what I and my family do to *stop* Women's Lib. Now I know that one family cannot change Women's Lib, but we feel better for doing our part.

- When we pull into a gas station and a broad is working there, we tell her that we don't believe in women working in service stations and that she can't put gas in our car. If the *man* in the station wants to fill the tank, he can. If not, we go to the next station. I would like to give you 95% of the responses we get: "Sir, it is against the law to discriminate." Then I tell them that if the law says the station has to hire her, I am the public and I can do as I please. Then we drive off, and the woman stands there looking stupid.
- If our car breaks down and we call a cab and a woman cab driver shows up at our house, we *refuse* the cab, but we always tell the feminists why. Their reaction is always the same as the station operator's.
- My girl is taken to school by myself because we have a woman bus driver. I have told the school my reasons! Their reaction is the same as the others.
- We screen all television shows. If any woman is playing a man's role we don't watch those programs ("Police Woman," or "Christie Love,"

or any of the news programs with women as reporters). My point is no matter how much you do, you'll never change me or my family because the law is on my side. If you're on television, we simply turn you off. If you're in a magazine, we simply throw it away.

- We also screen our friends. My wife doesn't hang around with any feminists.
- I also wish to say that I support my own family. I am an over-the-road driver. My wife *does not work*. When my girls look for their mother, they know where they can find her.

I could sit here and write you all night long, but my time is valuable to me and you are nothing but another bunch of feminists.

You can print any or all of this letter if you wish. My only desire is to show you that your time is wasted. You can't change me or my friends no matter what you or television do. (Wildermuth, 1976, pp. 6-7)

This letter sparked a great deal of reader response to the almost caricatured nature of the sexism displayed in his letter. Initially, readers demanded to know, "*Is he for real?*" (Chapman, 1976, p. 8), while other readers took the opportunity to label him as a sexist and ridicule his backward ideas. One reader wrote, "I think Gerald Robert Wildermuth is suffering from acute testosterone poisoning, complicated by severe closemindedness and bigotry" (Root, 1976, p. 8). Another wrote, "We've very

probably uncovered the missing link between humans and apes!” (Jenkins, 1976, p. 14). Yet another wrote,

I offer my deepest condolences to Mrs. Wildermuth and her daughters for being subject to her husband’s sick and perverted brainwashing. I can see why it would be an honor for him to be called a male chauvinist pig-because he more rightly deserves to be called a male psychopath.

(Clarke, 1976, p. 14)

The ability to publically question Mr. Wildermuth’s sanity and label him as a “psychopath,” “the missing link,” and as “suffering from acute testosterone poisoning” gave each of these readers a chance to both attack the enemy and to strengthen their own positions on subjects pertaining to women’s liberation. This is typical of the types of discussion and chaining out of ideas that might have happened in a traditional small group consciousness-raising forum.

In addition to challenging Mr. Wildermuth, several letters expressed sympathy for his family. For example,

Obviously, there is no hope for Gerald Robert Wildermuth. But, I am horrified to think that nothing can be done to stop him from damaging the minds of his three young daughters whom he is bent on raising to be outcasts and misfits in a very difficult world. This is a subtle and sinister form of child abuse. (Avigne, 1976, pp. 13-14)

Consciousness-raising functions were also served as women empathized with the victim status of his wife and daughters. For example, one reader empathized with his wife and daughters as women subject to his sexism. She wrote,

In response to our friend the “male chauvinist pig,” my first response was one of anger and rage at the utterly unbelievable statements he made. But, as I read on, my heart went out to that entire family: especially to his three daughters who are being taught that all feminists are lesbians (assuming, of course, that this is the worst fate, next to spinsterhood, that could befall any woman). I feel so sorry for those children who have enough opportunities to learn hatred outside the home without their father going out of his way to force it upon them.

Then my heart goes out to his wife, “who shares his views.” She is one of the most oppressed of our sisters. She is not only caught up in her ignorance, but she cannot seem to recognize the growing cancer in herself and her daughters. She must hate herself and all women to condone such behavior.

And last, I feel nothing but pity for this man who was never taught the value of women in society.

As women continue to expand their occupational choices, we will make sure he has to drive to the ends of the earth to find men still doing “men’s jobs”! (Jones, 1976, p. 13)

The letter writer used Wildermuth's views to strengthen her adherence to women's liberation and to create a rallying cry to fight oppression. One teenage girl took time to write a letter stating what she was doing to fight against the ideas of Mr.

Wildermuth. She wrote,

I'm 14 years old and I'm trying (successfully) to steer every child I know in the right direction. They're learning that *everyone* is to be treated as a person and *everyone* has a chance to make it. My little brother heard me read the Wildermuth letter, and he thought it was very stupid. I know more and more boys like my brother and it makes me happy.

Also, Mr. Wildermuth says his wife doesn't work. What does he call cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the kids? A vacation?

(Luppino, 1976, p. 13)

Another man wrote to ridicule Mr. Wildermuth's ideas and to justify his and his wife's choice of an egalitarian lifestyle. He wrote,

When my wife and I finally stopped laughing, we thought we would waste a little of our "valuable" time to point out a few contradictions to G.R. Wildermuth:

- If your wife had to seek employment because something happened to you, would she fall into your "lesbian" category because she had to work?

- It is a shame that you are such a narrow-minded person that you rob your children of the chance to socialize with other children before and after school just because a woman is driving the school bus. There are children in America who aren't afforded the luxury of riding the bus to school.
- It is apparent that not much news of any kind is viewed in your household, with or without women reporters. Times have changed, friend, and if you watched the news, you'd realize this.
- We support our family also. I am a sportswriter and political science student; my wife is a counter-person at a drive in. We share domestic duties and the enjoyment that two paychecks offer.
- If you ever have a few free minutes of your "valuable" time on hand again, pick up a copy of our Constitution at the local library (that place where the city and mostly women keep all those books). I direct your attention to the third word in the preamble.

A word to the wise should suffice. (Steinbrecher & Steinbrecher, 1976, p. 13)

One teacher wrote to say that young women were being educated in a way that would promote widespread social change whether or not Mr. Wildermuth approved. She wrote,

Mr. Wildermuth: you are truly naïve to believe that driving away from a female gas station attendant or refusing to ride in the cab with a female driver is affecting the Women's Movement in the least.

I will soon be teaching high school, encouraging hundreds of girls to be forceful, assertive, confident, and independent. To match each of your three unfortunate daughters, there are many girls who are learning that women can be athletes, doctors, lawyers, and yes, Mr. Wildermuth, even cabdrivers and gas-station attendants. (Ignico, 1976, p. 14)

Creating Mr. Wildermuth as a sexist foil, also allowed males to show solidarity with the women's liberation movement. One teenage boy wrote, "I hope the next female gas-station attendant or cabdriver you turn down gives you the finger and spits in your eye! By the way . . . I am 13 years old and as male as you are" (Eddinger, 1976, p. 14).

Finally. A female police officer wrote to stress the import of the public service provided by both male and female officers. It allowed the letter writer to present herself as an altruistic public servant, willing to protect every citizen, sexist or not. She wrote,

I'm in law enforcement. That is something I love. Everyday I meet with Gerald Robert Wildermuths who say, "I want to talk to a *man!*"
What am I, a snake?

You should remember me, I am the police officer who might cradle your wife, you, or your children in her arms after a stabbing, rape or accident. I am the police officer who stops a burglar from entering your home.

And I still want to do that for you. (Wollum, 1976, p. 14)

Thus, publishing Mr. Wildermuth's letter functioned to create dialectic between the readers and a particular representation of broader sexist attitudes, it allowed readers to further justify their feminist attitudes and it created a rallying cry strengthening readers resolve to continue to engage in their own feminist life choices.

Another function exhibited in the letters to the editor was promoting activism. Many readers wrote to share moments of activism in their own lives and to help or seek help from other readers. In this sense, the broad availability of the magazine and the wide readership allowed consciousness-raising functions to leave the theoretical realm and to manifest themselves in readers' lives. Indeed, the consciousness-raising promoted by *Ms.* was able to avoid the traditional trap of solipsistic soul searching that critics of second wave consciousness-raising have identified. Readers and editors were able to provide information and encouragement for activism in women's lives. The effect of the magazine was often very direct and influential in reader's choices to live their politics. The magazine promoted activism in three primary ways: first, it provided readers with information necessary to an epistemic understanding of their personal experiences as women in society; second, it provided women with intellectual and emotional support necessary to act; third, it

provided women with practical prescriptions or methods for action. In that sense, it allowed readers to move beyond complaining. It allowed readers to engage in activism.

Initially, the magazine allowed women to understand their experiences as women in society. For example, one letter thanked *Ms.* for helping her to understand her eating disorder. She wrote,

Overeating is *repulsive* to me! When I am with others who are gorging themselves, I stop eating. I am obsessed with being bony. During my first two years of college I weighed a normal 130 pounds for my height of five feet, six inches. Now, eight years later, I weigh 100 pounds or less.

After my sophomore year in college, I became pregnant. I did not marry. I could not accept abortion then. Throughout my pregnancy I was extremely self-conscious of my bloated stomach. I fasted. I had gained a mere four pounds during my full-term pregnancy. I gave the child up for adoption. I never wanted to feel “fat” again.

Friends and family are constantly telling me that I’m too thin. But, my figure in the mirror is distorted: I think I must still lose *more* weight!

Until reading the article on anorexia nervosa, I had never admitted that I may have a psychological/emotional problem. I can now admit that my unplanned pregnancy continues to cause me guilt,

and makes me deprive myself because I feel I am not deserving. But, thanks to the article, I know I am not alone. I have been able to acknowledge my problem-and seek help. (Name withheld, 1976a, pp. 4,7)

In this case, the reader was able to better understand herself and the problems she was facing in her life because of her interaction with the magazine. In fact, as she stated, the knowledge of her problem was a precondition to her ability to act.

Another moment of self discovery prompted through interaction with the magazine involved one woman's choice to have children. She wrote,

I have long been saying to everyone that I loved children but did not want my own, because I was planning a career as a pediatric nurse and writer and would not "have time" for them.

I treasure every minute I spend with children, watching them, talking to them . . . and in the delivery room, as a student nurse, watching them be born. Still I held firm in my head that I would not have time in my life to have my own.

Imagine my surprise when the May issue of *Ms.* arrived with Letty Pogrebin's amazing article on motherhood: I cried and underlined the whole time I read. She has shown me that self actualization and motherhood are not at all the incompatible roles I believed them to be. Roles and limits are what you make them and where you place them.

As a woman and a person, I intend to make time for everything, including children. Other people limit you only if you let them. (Luscombe, 1973, p. 8)

As the letter writer shared, her interaction with *Ms.* directly affected her life choices, opening her range of possibilities for choices in her life.

The second aspect of activism promoted in the pages of *Ms.* was emotional support. The magazine itself was used as one would use a good friend to provide emotional support while engaging in any action that was scary or intimidating. In the case of *Ms.*, readers often took the magazine along as they would a good friend. These examples of activism in women's personal lives ranged from consumer decisions to job discrimination and training. For example, one reader wrote about her experience with a faulty stereo. She said,

Thanks to "No More *Ms.* Nice Guy," I'm now listening to a tape on a much better amplifier than the defective one I first received. It took 45 minutes, a phone call to Toledo, and as much nerve as is possible for me to muster in a whole week, but the method really worked

Somehow the music sounds sweeter than usual. Thanks for teaching me a technique for getting proper treatment without falling back on either tears or curses. (McKinney, 1975, p. 4)

In this case the reader was able to stand up for herself in a way that she never had before. In another example, one woman used *Ms.* the help her buy a car and interact with the car salesman. She wrote,

Well, those Honda folks put an ad in *Ms.* that talked about rack and pinion steering, and it sold me their car. The car is terrific, and the steering is even better, and I think you should know that I wrote them and told them to keep advertising in *Ms.*

When I went down to look the Honda Civic over, I took the issue of *Ms.* in which the ad appeared with me, and the salesperson took me on a tour of the engine before he started going over the advantages of color schemes. I don't know whether he took me seriously because his consciousness had been raised, or because Honda tells their salespeople to watch out for grim women clutching *Ms.* magazine and marching stoically along mumbling things about disc brakes. But, he *did* take me seriously. It was a great change for the better, and they should all be told it works. (Kirk-Marshall, 1975, p. 7)

In this case, *Ms.* provided direct support for the reader as she went to purchase a car.

Other readers found that *Ms.* helped them to believe in themselves and their ability in the workplace. Initially, one reader wrote,

I would like to thank you for giving me the support to speak up as a woman. Recently I was discriminated against by a state employment agency (they would not help me find a job as a dishwasher). They felt that a female was not capable of performing the job. I filed a

discrimination case against them and won. Now any female can apply for the job. (Cunningham P. , 1976, p. 7)

In a similar vein, another reader found inspiration to return to school and improve her training. She wrote,

I am now a secretary, and although I enjoy this particular job, I have always known that secretarial work is not enough for me. But, what alternatives are there for a person who is “retarded” in math? With your article in hand and my growing self confidence, I hope to conquer the enemy –math-and open more possibilities for my future. (Blum, 1977, p. 5)

Each of these examples shows the emotional support role that *Ms.* was able to play in the lives of readers. Interestingly, one might assume that emotional and social support could only function in face to face consciousness-raising forms. However, the experience of readers interacting with *Ms.* belies this assumption. As women carried the magazine and the ideas learned in the magazine with them, they were able to tap their inner strength and conquer challenges that they had been afraid to face before.

The third aspect of activism promoted in *Ms.* was practical. Articles and letters in the magazine gave readers direct courses of action to pursue. This occurred through both direct suggestions and through readers’ incorporation of general information provided in the magazine. For example, the magazine published

information on a summer workshop. Participants at the workshop responded to their experience. They wrote,

We, the undersigned, have something very special to thank you for. Through an announcement in the “Gazette” of your April, 1976, issue, each one of us learned about the Summer Institute on the Interpretation of Women’s History at Sarah Lawrence College. We are all high school teachers, and *Ms.* has reached us in all parts of the country.

We will never be the same after these three weeks together. The caliber and intensity of this experience have not only expanded our knowledge of the role of women in American history, but, more importantly, they have affected how we view that role and ultimately ourselves and each other. None of us has been unchanged or untouched.

Forty-five teachers shared this institute funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Historical Association. We are indebted to those women who conceived this program and who taught and guided us: Gerda Lerner, Sara Evans, Carol Groneman and Amy Swerdlow, Joan Kely-Gadol and the Committee of Women Historians of the American Historical Association.

And thank *you, Ms.* for your role in bringing us here. (Miller, et al., 1976, pp. 7,10)

In this case, the attendees chose to go to the conference because they learned about it in *Ms.* The ability to distribute this type of information to their broad audience of readers allowed like-minded women with a similar thirst for knowledge to find each other in a particular learning environment.

Another letter detailed the reader response to coverage of a worm farm. The farm's owners wrote,

We would like to bring you up to date on the response to Flowerfield Enterprises, our worm farm, has receive after having been covered in the August, 1973, *Ms.* "Gazette."

The response has been gratifying in its intensity and sincerity. In May, 1974, we received our one-hundredth letter mentioning that article. We have answered each letter personally because we wanted each individual to know that what she or he had to say was important, just as we feel that what we have to say is important.

We have had many visitors, and made several new friends as a result of the article. (Appelhof & Wissman, 1974, p. 4)

As illustrated by this letter, interaction with the magazine allowed women to make connections and find commonalities between themselves. Since there were a great number of women reading the magazine, women had access to information on a variety of types of activism.

In one case, a reader took the knowledge she gleaned from the pages of *Ms.* and used it to save her life. She wrote,

It is possible that reading an article in *Ms.* saved my life Dr. Storch's statements that there is not enough written about breast cancer in most books for and about women and her list of the five high-risk groups prompted me to return to my doctor for another checkup. Until then I had allowed myself to be lulled into a false sense of security by a doctor who merely "watched" a cystic breast It was lucky because . . . this time he suspected a malignancy. I was operated on . . . I got there in time to have all the cancer removed. (Kanter, 1973, p. 6)

In this case, the reader became aware of additional information in the pages of *Ms.* and acted on it in way that may have saved her life. There are many examples of individual activism engaged in by readers. However, readers were able to extend their understanding beyond themselves as well.

In fact, *Ms.* helped women to form broader connections among women as a group. It encouraged women to understand feminist activism as more than changing their individual lives. For example one reader wrote,

It was then that I realized it's not enough to liberate yourself and your immediate family. *All* men and all women must be liberated in order to break this perpetual chain of male chauvinist influence on our children. We can no longer sit at home contentedly –we must go out and be active and vocal. Your magazine is a giant step toward breaking that chain. (McAusland, 1972, p. 8)

This letter illustrates the reader's desire to engage in activism based on information discovered and shared through the pages of *Ms.*

In addition to recognizing the need for broader activism, some readers shared highly personal stories and suggestions for change to promote that end. In two examples, women responded to an article about rape by sharing their stories and making suggestions for change. The first reader wrote,

I just read the article about the rape trial, and it shook *me* up.

A couple of years ago, my older (by two years) sister was raped by six men. With understanding and encouragement from our family and her friends, she took the case to court. What followed was a nightmare ending in the men being acquitted.

She was going to leave the town where the crime occurred because she felt like a spectacle: like "everybody knew," but she stayed because she knows she did nothing wrong.

During the course of my sister's trial against her attackers, other women stepped forward saying that these men had raped them, too, but they never reported it. My sister might have been spared her ordeal if only . . .

I encourage other rape victims to report the crime, *please*, for the sake of women all over the world. (Name withheld, 1977a, p. 8).

By sharing her experience reading the article, her sister's experience and suggestions for change, the writer of the above example elucidated the process of mediated

consciousness-raising. Another reader had a more detailed response to the same article. She wrote,

I read with great interest the horrifying but brave story of two rape victims (“The Rape Trial That’s Shaking Up France” October, 1976).

Almost three years ago, I was sodomized at gunpoint in my own apartment. When I called the “rape line” at police headquarters, I requested specifically that a policewoman come to my apartment for the debriefing. My request was ignored. Instead of a woman, I was shocked to see six uniformed policemen barge into my home.

Fortunately, the detective in charge was sensitive enough to send most of them out until I had been taken to the hospital- where I was treated with unbelievable crassness by the doctors and nurses alike. The man who broke into my home was never apprehended, though I badgered the police for almost a year.

I believe three things not done by the authorities could have been done to help:

- No policewoman was on duty at the “rape line” on a Sunday night. Increased numbers of police women should be assigned to the rape line on weekends.
- The hospital was rude and inattentive to my needs because I had been “merely sodomized.”

- I believe the police did not do a thorough job of investigation in my case for that same reason.

Anne Tonglet's and Araceli Castellano's story has motivated me to begin to fight again against sex criminals, which I had dropped in frustration. Woman should urge their civic representatives to increase the ranks of police women on the force. Rape victim assistance groups should make themselves better known to and fight to track down every sex criminal until he has been punished. I hope the article evoked similar reactions from other women. (Name withheld, 1977, p. 8)

Again, the sharing of personal experience with the other readers of the magazine and the recognition of the story's role in moving this reader to activism suggest that the process on mediated consciousness-raising was able to overcome barriers to action posed by traditional consciousness-raising. The point of the magazine and the letters from readers was to share stories and develop new epistemological and methodological understanding on the place of women and feminist activism in society. In this sense, the readers moved from identification and sharing of information with sisters to a greater understanding of the epistemological status of women in our society. It also allowed them to begin to grasp methods for change at both personal and societal levels.

Conclusion

Conscious-raising was one of the primary tools used by second wave feminists. It was primarily considered a small group process that allowed participants face time to share personal experiences and discover epistemological connections between their experiences as women. Small group consciousness-raising generally stressed equality among participants, lacked leadership structures, discouraged judgment, tried to maintain the privacy of participants and excluded men. The intent was that these groups would function to empower women as individuals and as members of the group classified as women.

While it was one of the primary methods of spreading information and taking control of information that was produced for and about women, small group consciousness-raising was subject to some criticisms. These criticisms included: 1. A lack of explicit leadership in the groups created an informal, manipulative elite to form; 2. Requiring group members to be non-judgmental merely suppressed debate and encouraged backbiting. Disallowing judgment discouraged dialectic, a necessary component of effective activism; 3. Most small group consciousness-raising took place among white middle class women causing a flawed epistemological understanding of women's experience. As these concerns suggest, consciousness-raising would function better as an open system allowing for transformation of methods to procure the best results. Even though mediated consciousness-raising did not provide the benefits of interpersonal interaction that might be gained from being

physically present in a small group, it did diminish many of the problems identified with small group consciousness-raising.

In this context, I argue that the letters section of *Ms.* magazine functioned as an open consciousness-raising forum. As mediated consciousness-raising, *Ms.* kept the most important functions of second wave consciousness-raising including identification, shared stories, privacy and a notion of shared experiences among women. However, it also broadened the methodological notion of consciousness-raising, allowing for more effective realization of consciousness-raising's goals. Improvements in the method which were linked to mediated nature of the magazine included: 1. Incorporation of a very broad range of stories from many different individuals with different experiences which allowed for identification of common experiences and recognition of the many different aspects of the notion of woman; 2. Making the leadership structure explicit allowed for editors to guide discussions in a non-manipulative way without hindering participants' ability to speak; 3. Allowing a dialectic discussion among readers helped generate more ideas from differing perspectives; 4. Including all who wished to participate as well as multiple racial and gendered approaches revealed many different perspectives; 5. Encouraging activism allowed mediated consciousness-raising to help participants move from the discovery of feminist ideals to their implementation through activism.

The mediated nature of consciousness-raising in *Ms.* functionally broadened the methodological approach to consciousness-raising ultimately creating a more epistemologically accurate, open and effective form of consciousness-raising for the

readers involved in the process. By expanding the notions of consciousness-raising and including a broad variety of perspectives, mediated consciousness-raising in *Ms.* began to bridge the gap between traditional second wave consciousness-raising and modern notions of third wave consciousness-raising.

Chapter 3: Men and Masculinities in *Ms.*

Introduction

While most of the rhetoric produced by *Ms.* was authored by, intended for and focused on women, a discussion of women's roles requires a discussion of men's roles since masculine and feminine roles are often defined in relation to one another. In examining the rhetoric of the Women's Liberation Movement in *Ms.*, it is important to note that the rhetoric produced by movements for social change is a dynamic site for understanding the nature of human symbol use. As Conrad states, "because the rhetoric of movements invariably antagonizes and attracts persons, creates and resolves conflicts, stabilizes and upsets societies, it reveals the complex dynamic that is human symbolization" (1981, p. 284). In order to understand how rhetorical transformations occur in a social movement, it is essential to examine the "interaction between a movement and its surrounding society" (1981, pp. 284-5). To illustrate this claim, this chapter examines the relationship between the feminist movement and men as developed in the pages of *Ms.*

The process and rhetorical functions present in the interaction between *Ms.* and men partially represent the way that Women's Liberation was interacting with society as a whole. By examining the interaction between *Ms.* and men through the lens of the Burkean cycle of guilt and redemption, I argue that, for *Ms.* readers and others in the movement with similar perspectives, the process of secular redemption for men sympathetic to the movement was necessary to purify them to the extent that they could participate in precipitating social change. Burke's cycle of secular

redemption can be used to understand competing systems of order (patriarchy and women's liberation) which promote mutually exclusive god terms (institutionalized patriarchal hierarchy and equality in all forms). In order to become pure in one order, public rejection of the other order was necessary. Without a process for purifying men, there could be no sense of identification between men and the feminist movement which would make it impossible to create social change. In this chapter I do not attempt to provide a full dramatic understanding of social movements as has been done elsewhere (Griffin L. M., 1969). Instead I present a snapshot of a dialectical interaction between a social movement and their other, between second wave feminists and men. In the case of *Ms.*, the outcome of this process was ultimately comic, allowing for constructions of men as both enemy and friend. While they may not have broken the human cycle of creating hierarchies and striving for Utopia identified by Burke, the men and women involved in this rhetorical moment found a measure of comic relief as they were able to disrupt the cycle and find a way to work together for feminist goals.

One problem that has been identified with Second Wave theorists is their failure to theorize masculinity. Interestingly, *Ms.* did not make this mistake. Instead, they enthymematically addressed the issue through various articles, letters to the editor and covers. *Ms.* theorized masculinity in a way that allowed men to both represent patriarchal devil figures and to become part of a feminist corporate "we" by opening a path for men who wished to be redeemed in the eyes of the women's movement. Thus, they offered a clear choice between traditional patriarchal notions

of order and feminist notions of order. Providing a choice for men to be redeemed was the only possible response to a rhetorical situation that required a mechanism for broad and durable social change. Without this mechanism, feminism would be unable to function since men make up roughly half of the population and largely controlled the power structure. Indeed, the only true social change could be wrought by persuading both women *and* men. While *Ms.* did not provide a clear mythic basis for the movement, they provided an ideological god term which allowed them to utilize the functions of mythic redemption allowing men to transform themselves from the other, representative of evil, to human beings who could be identified with by members of the group. In this sense, men could become, on some level, part of the feminist corporate “we.” However, this identification was ultimately comic because only some men were redeemed. Thus, the patriarchal structure and its evil notions of the order remained in competition with the feminist order. This external threat was necessary to propel women to seek additional social change.

Secular Redemption

Secular redemption involved five rhetorical components that were presented in the magazine. These components can be explained functionally as parts of Burke’s rhetorical cycle of order which includes the “language –caused and language resolved movement . . . from alienation through purification to redemption . . .” (Rueckert, 1982, p. 138). First, articles in *Ms.* identified a devil figure in descriptions of traditionally patriarchal men and active sexists. In this way, they set up the dominant order as the evil counterpart of their imagined ideal or utopia. In a sense they flipped

the script of what was traditionally considered goodness by the patriarchal order. In many ways, what they sought for became the opposite of currently accepted norms. This tactic functioned to create a standard of objectionable behavior to rally against allowing feminists to make claims about patriarchy while reserving the possibility that patriarchal beliefs and attitudes were not necessarily linked directly to biological sex.

Second, *Ms.* criticized traditional forms of masculinity and traditional sex role divisions in order to demonstrate that the system was indeed broken for both men and women. In Burkean terms, *Ms.* established a sense of guilt by arguing that there was an extant sense of alienation between the patriarchal order and many if not most men. They did this by challenging the basis for the claims of biological difference between men and women which opened the debate to allow questioning of the notion of inherent male superiority as the natural order of things. In concert with questioning the notion of biological differences, they criticized traditional forms of masculinity by showing that the system did not function effectively for all men.

The third step in the redemptive process was to establish new idealized standards for interaction between men and women in society. This involved identifying a unifying god term which determined organizational principles for a new feminist order. In this case, the god term was equality in its many forms.

Fourth, in order to be accepted by the movement, men were required to engage in a process of redemption through both rhetorical mortification and rhetorical victimage. This process involved both admitting their past wrongs as individuals

including explanations of the ways that they had changed and scapegoating the patriarchal system that had provided flawed notions of the good. Those men who mended their ways were held up as heroes for both the support they gave their wives and for their willingness to scapegoat traditional masculinity. Those who did not repent were excluded from a new feminist consciousness both through their own choices and as their wives left them and their families broke up. Thus, the process of identification was used to label who was part of a corporate we and who was an other.

Fifth, it was important to maintain a sense of uncertainty about the future of gendered relations. Men who repented could now become feminists or supporters of the movement. However, *Ms.* needed to maintain the external threat of traditional sex role stereotypes and masculinity so that readers and activists could feel motivated to change and redouble their efforts. This functioned comically because both men who were redeemed and those who were not still participated in the dominant order.

Feminism & Masculinity

Modern rhetorical theorists have criticized feminism for failure to examine men and masculinity. In sum, “feminists don’t theorize about men” (Mandziuk, 2000, p. 105). This failure to attend to issues of masculinity creates significant limitations. Since “the notions of ‘men’ and/or ‘masculinity’ largely have been defined unproblematically,” scholars face a serious disconnect between their desire for feminist social change and their inability to view masculinity as anything other than “a homogenous and monolithic force” (Mandziuk, 2000, p. 105). There is no doubt that understanding women’s perspectives is important. However, if the goal of

the feminist movement is to produce social transformation, feminists cannot merely “highlight women’s experiences as victims of hegemonic structures of patriarchy” because this amounts to active participation in “the reproduction of masculinity(s) through a set of micro practices that contribute to the construction of a more hegemonic and resistant patriarchy” (Forbes, 2002, pp. 270-271). Rather than promoting a new order based on equality between the sexes, cultivation of a resistant patriarchy would actually uphold a patriarchal order. This is particularly important in the media because “just as gender is enacted and constructed by individuals, it also constructed in media content” (Consalvo, 2003, p. 29).

In the case of *Ms.*, the staff refused to theorize masculinity explicitly. However, during the first five years of publication, they included articles by and about men that laid a foundation for entymematic understanding of how a reformed masculinity could function in relation to the women’s movement. In its 1975 “Special Issue on Men,” the editorial introduction said,

People are always asking what feminists think of men-and often wrongly translating feminism into simplistic man hating. This special issue does not pretend to be a definitive statement on the subject – except to say that a simple answer is clearly impossible; if anything, it offers a cumulative answer. Instead of, for example, a theoretical discussion of patriarchy, we gathered diverse personal testimonies on sexual politics of everyday life. (*Ms.*, 1975, p. 47)

This philosophy generally represents *Ms.*' treatment of men throughout the first 5 years. *Ms.* both discussed men and let men speak for themselves allowing readers to draw conclusions inductively, to complete the enthymeme over time. *Ms.*' depiction of masculinity included all the components of a process of secular redemption, allowing men to reject membership in the dominant mode of patriarchal masculinity and to reshape themselves into ardent supporters of the feminist movement.

In sum, Second Wave Feminism has been criticized for its failure to theorize masculinity. Indeed, many refused to theorize masculinity explicitly. This failure could potentially pit men as a group against women as a group. Such a situation could not be productive for either side of the conflict. Thus, *Ms.* chose to theorize masculinity implicitly or inductively because failure to do so at all would mean failure to promote social change. As an example of second wave feminist rhetoric *Ms.* faced a unique challenge. They needed to provide the information and focus that were necessary to empower women while opening the path for transformation of a society as a whole. In this process, they sought to include men as both friends and enemies, as insiders and outsiders, in the pages of the magazine. As enemies, certain men became representatives of the patriarchal system and active agents of oppression to be fought against. The patriarchal man became the devil figure in the pages of *Ms.* However, pure demonization would only lead to division and strife rather than to positive change. So, the editors and staff of *Ms.* also developed a positive notion of a new masculinity.

Burke's Concept of Secular Redemption

According to Griffin, “all movements are essentially moral-strivings for salvation, perfection, the ‘good’” (Griffin L. M., 1969, p. 465). Indeed, “to study a movement is to study a drama, an act of transformation, an act that ends in transcendence, the achievement of salvation . . . And hence to study a movement is to study its form” (Cathcart, 1978, p. 233). Thus, it is important to understand the formal aspects of a rhetorical movement since its dramatic form is so closely linked to its function and outcomes. In this chapter, I address the formal requirements for moving an individual (one man) from the classification of other (participants and beneficiaries of the patriarchal order) to a state of identification (with feminists) in which he can become an accepted member/supporter of the corporate we (the feminist movement).

This analysis does not seek to examine the full range of the feminist movement, rather to examine a small component of that movement as represented in particular rhetorical artifacts in *Ms.* in an effort to establish greater understanding of functional aspects of secular redemption for men sympathetic to the feminist movement. Because,

Rhetorical movements are complex tapestries Multiple expressions of individual needs, common frustrations, and conflicts between self and society are woven together into a fabric whose color, pattern and texture are both part of and separate from that of the individual threads Only by examining each individual thread can

a critic begin to comprehend the form of the fabric . . . (Conrad C. , 1981, pp. 296-297)

To this end, it is necessary to understand Burke's cycle of secular redemption or the "pursuit of good."

Initially, one must note that secular redemption is secular in content although it shares formal functional characteristics with religion. As Burke states, "Our purpose is simply to ask how theological principles can be shown to have usable secular analogies" (1961, p. 2). Burke believes that,

In so far as religious doctrine is verbal, it will necessarily exemplify its nature as verbalization Hence it should be possible to analyze remarks about the "nature of 'God,'" like remarks about the "nature of 'Reason,'" in their sheer formality as observations about the nature of language. (Burke, 1961, p. 1)

Thus, an understanding of redemption in Burkean terms is not necessarily religious. However, it remains moral, a question of determining the good through linguistic interaction in society. "According to Burke, no moral action is possible without language an act, to be an act, must be willed; the will, to be a will, must be free to choose between alternatives" (Rueckert, 1982, p. 145). In this sense, Burke identifies the process of creating a moral order that people can "'believe' in, but which . . . is designed to save man in this world" (Rueckert, 1982, p. 134). The process of redemption is proof of the moral underpinnings of Burke's system, "The categorical guilt and the emphasis on pollution-purification-and-redemption as an

achieved state indicate more clearly than anything else the fundamentally moral and ethical center of Burke” (Rueckert, 1982, p. 134). Indeed, “the essence of drama is the moral choice and willed action.” (Rueckert, 1982, p. 145). Therefore, for Burke, a social movement functions analogically to religion in that it provides a moral choice that conflicts with dominant notions of order.

To understand the process of secular redemption, it is necessary to understand Burke’s notion of the pursuit of the good. According to Burke, this pursuit takes a particular rhetorical form. He states,

Here are the steps
In the Iron Law of History
That welds Order and Sacrifice:

Order leads to Guilt
(for who can keep commandments!)
Guilt needs Redemption
(for who would not be cleansed!)
Redemption needs redeemer
(which is to say Victim!)

Order
Through Guilt
To Victimage
(hence: Cult of the Kill)
(Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion*, 1961, pp. 4-5)

Through this process, moral choice can be made in an acceptable manner that purifies individuals so that they may participate in social order.

Initially, Burke argues that “socio-political hierarchy which . . . [humans create] . . . *because* . . . [they are] . . . “the language-using animal, is the most immediate of all . . . concerns” (Rueckert, 1982, p. 203). Thus, the organization of

the social body is central to understanding the creation and dissolution of moral systems of order in our world. Indeed, a person's

experience is so dominated and his[her] consciousness is so permeated by the socio-political hierarchy that it tends to shape his [her] ideas of everything else . . . everything derives meaning and value from its relation to the value-structure of the socio-political hierarchy.

(Rueckert, 1982, p. 204)

Given the power of the value structure of the dominant order, the emergence of guilt is,

Inevitable and natural to the human condition because the social order causes inevitable violation The anxiety caused by guilt motivates humans to purge it . . . and makes purification and redemption a . . . necessity . . . [because] . . . unresolved, guilt fragments and corrodes the self. (Winslow, 2007, p. 4)

Order as expressed in the dominant moral paradigm is disrupted when guilt arises.

Guilt is born out of imperfection within the dominant paradigm.

As guilt rips the dominant paradigm open, undermining its moral basis, there is a need for redemption. While Burke seems to assume that redemption may primarily bring members back into the dominant fold, he does recognize the possibility of competing moral systems. In such a case, flaws in the dominant order and its linguistic control of people may be responsible for the emergence of guilt rather than violations by individuals themselves.

Finding a means of achieving secular redemption is essential in a social movement aimed at changing adherence from one system to a conflicting system. In the case movements calling for social change, the dominant system becomes the source of pollution that must be purged. “Redemption . . . must always be preceded by a catharsis or purge; disregarding, for the moment, what might have produced the pollution which makes the purification necessary” (Rueckert, 1982, pp. 145-146).

To be redeemed, either victimage or mortification is essential. Victimage is “to make others suffer for our sins” (Rueckert, 1982, p. 147). Mortification is “to make ourselves suffer for our own sins” (Rueckert, 1982, p. 147). In the social movement context, both victimage and mortification are necessary. Victimage is necessary to create a scapegoat, “a rhetorical Vile Beast to be slain” or a point of conflict, “a Negation to be negated” (Griffin L. M., 1969, p. 464). Mortification is necessary to transform the other into a member of the corporate we, to allow for identification which is “compensatory to division” (Burke, 1969, p. 22). This process is temporal as the old evil aspects of the individual and his or her actions are cast off in favor of the newly purified individual who is anxious to act morally within his or her new concept of order. Through mortification, the individual is cleansed of their past sins and they are now able to choose the good.

Through the process of mortification and victimage, redemption may be achieved. Indeed, “redemption as an achieved state is a moment of stasis” (Rueckert, 1982, p. 137), in which resolution may be felt and achieved regardless of events that follow. In this moment, one may perceive “unity among many previously discordant

ideas and things” (Rueckert, 1982, p. 138). In this sense redemption is a moment of insight, a will to choose, a decision to become a disciple of a moral system that results in a change in behavior. This moment of insight may be replicated many times on an individual level. If redemption can be achieved on a mass scale, social change follows.

Secular Redemption in Ms.

In the context of *Ms.* as one instance of feminist engagement with men and masculinity, there were several content areas that informed the process outlined above. The first step was to demonize traditional masculinity and the role prescriptions associated with it. Establishing traditional masculinity as a devil term allowed *Ms.* to create a scapegoat in the competing moral order by representing chauvinists as a dying breed. However, to gain adherents among men, simple demonization of all males was surely a losing strategy. Therefore, *Ms.* had to create a path to redemption for those men who were willing to eschew their harmful embrace of masculine power and hierarchies and worship the god of equality. The second step in this redemptive process was to problematize the key concepts of the traditional sexist order and to induce a state of guilt by presenting evidence that the god terms of the masculine order were fundamentally flawed. Specifically, *Ms.* identified the concept of natural biological difference and that of gendered hierarchy as areas to be questioned in order to spur a sense of guilt among their participants. Third, feminist rhetoric had to establish a god term that would function to create a moral ideal which individuals could seek to actualize. In the case of *Ms.*, this term was equality for all

human beings regardless of sex. Equality was the primary guiding principle in all areas for those who sought to recognize the feminist ideal. Fourth, men who wished to change were allowed to speak on the pages of *Ms.* engaging in personal confessions which functioned as a process of mortification. By embracing both the mortification (individual internalized scapegoating), through confessions, and victimage (externally imposed scapegoating), through demonization of patriarchy, of men as a class, *Ms.*' approach became comic. In this way they stopped short of extending their ideology to the point of tragedy because the opportunity to atone for their sins meant that all men were potentially persuadable, that no men should be eliminated as unredeemable. The final step in the redemptive process was to label the male converts as heroes, to identify that moment of stasis, of redemption and admission to the feminist order in the pages of *Ms.*

Constructing an Enemy: Traditional Masculinity as a Devil Term

In the pages of *Ms.* traditional masculinity was defined with four primary characteristics: 1. Traditional men were defined as hyper masculine he-men. They were power brokers who controlled the world around them through physical, political, or monetary power; 2. Traditional men were portrayed as sexually promiscuous and dominating; 3. Traditional men defined themselves in opposition to women. 4. Traditional men dominated and controlled the women in their lives to maintain their masculinity. Violence was one method of maintaining this dominance and control. Through each of these characteristics, men expressed power over others to maintain their dominant place in the hierarchy. Because equality was a primary

feminist goal, definitions of masculinity that relied on stereotypical patriarchal notions became the opposing force, the devil term. Thus, men who identified with these hyper-masculine standards were the enemy who must either be converted and allowed to redeem themselves or be conquered and relegated to obscurity. In the following section, I cite specific examples and articles as they represent of a broader pattern of representations of traditional masculinity.

Initially, traditional men were considered he-men, fitting into the hyper-masculine stereotype. One author wrote, “Hollywood has gone a long way to reflect and glorify it in such figures as the John Wayne-style cowboy, the private eye, war hero, foreign correspondent, lone adventurer-all ‘he-men’ . . . whose physical strength, courage, and masculine wiles to conquer their worlds, their villainous rivals, and their women” (Gould, 1973, p. 18). In addition to great physical strength, a traditionally masculine man had real political power which allowed them to affirm their sense of hyper-masculine power. One article stated, “Masculine activities include, “foreign policy and high finance Participating in these activities then takes on the added dimension of a masculinity affirming ritual” (Fasteau M. , 1972, p. 33). Thus, men were to be the power brokers, the ones who controlled the world around them. For men who were not political power brokers or cultural heroes, a sense of masculinity could be achieved through earning money. Because in reality, “there are few frontiers to conquer, or international spy rings to crack, or glorious wars to wage. All that is left for the real-life, middle-class man is the battle for the bulging wallet” (Gould, 1973, p. 18). This understanding was not limited to men. It

was a cultural understanding. “Both men and women . . . have bought the myth that endows a money making man with sexiness and virility, and is based on man’s dominance, strength, and ability to provide for and care for ‘his’ woman” (Gould, 1973, p. 18). Measuring man by his pocketbook was inconsistent with the very feminist principles that *Ms.* was trying to proclaim. Additionally, this type of measure assessed individual men in relation to their ability to meet masculine standards rather than as human beings. Indeed, Gould argued,

In our culture money equals success. Does it also equal masculinity?
Yes-to the extent that a man is too often measured by his money, by what he is “worth.” Not by his worth as a human being, but by what he is able to earn. (Gould, 1973, p. 18)

Thus, a man could take his place in the patriarchal order by engaging in hyper-masculine activities as exemplified in the lives of heroes, movie stars, political power brokers or those who achieved wealth.

The second aspect of traditional masculinity involved sexual inequality and assertion of power over women. This power came through limitation of women’s sexual freedom and through sexual exploitation of women. Part of this sexualized power was derived from defining one’s self in opposition to the feminine. In an article about sports and masculinity, Riley stated,

The male athlete, be he hetero- or homo-sexual, thinks of himself as the least feminized being in the universe. The straight’s rationale for this is obvious; gays in sports feel they’ve carried masculinity to the

last achievable degree of sophistication – man versus man in all walks, runs, crawls, and sleeps of life. Straights take – as their inalienable right to occupancy at the top of the male universe-all the major-league pussy that goes with the territory. “It ain’t just the bread,” a basketball pro once told me, “it’s the bitches.” (Riley, 1974, p. 98)

In this sense, the ability to sleep with many women was a key component in traditional masculinity. Another example can be found in one family. Writing as an adult, one of the girls in the family remembered,

My father expected all his sons to have sex with women. “Like bulls,” he said, “a man *needs* to get a little something on his stick.” And so, on Saturday nights, into town they went, chasing the girls. My sister was rarely allowed into town alone, and if the dress she wore fitted too snugly at the waist, or if her cleavage dipped too far below her collarbone, she was made to stay home.

“But why can’t I go too,” she would cry

“They’re the boys, your brothers, *that’s* why they can go.”

Naturally when she got the chance, she chased after boys. But, when this was discovered. She was whipped and locked in her room.

(Straight Pine (A pseudonym), 1975, p. 64)

This example illustrates the link between sexual promiscuity and masculine dominance and the double standard that existed for women. For men masculinity was

about free sexuality and the ability to find sexual partners anywhere and everywhere one could. But, it was also about limiting and controlling the sexuality of women. In this sense, sexuality might be seen as a type of currency used to support notions of hyper-masculine control just as actual money was.

The third component of traditional masculinity was maintaining a clear and naturalized difference between men and women. This difference was partially signaled by physical separation. One man wrote,

During my boyhood, I considered it “natural” for women to leave the larger world, except as visitors, once they married and had children. Just as it was “natural” for my father to make all of the economic and most of the other decisions. (Hetnoff, 1974, p. 16)

From the perspective of traditional masculinity, the difference between men and women placed them in different spheres.

Another man explained how men were required to define themselves in opposition to women to gain masculine status. He wrote,

As a man, my conditioning and problems are not only different, but virtually the inverse of those of most women. We’ve been taught that “real men” are never passive or dependent, always dominant in relationships with women or other men, don’t talk about or directly express feelings; especially feelings that don’t contribute to dominance. (Fasteau M. , 1972a, p. 16)

Thus, a real man was not a woman and the fewer the shared characteristics, the better. Another example came from athletics,

Athletes so disdain the thought of being women. The worst thing you can call another athlete is “pussy.” The thought of being a woman so terrifies most American males, athletes and nonathletes alike, that any other condition seems preferable-even death, which can at least be considered an honorable state. (Riley, 1974, p. 98)

This example points to an additional dimension of hyper masculinity, the importance of maintaining masculine honor. In this case, to be a woman was worse than death in terms of maintaining and sustaining masculinity. This definition of men and women as opposite was fundamental to promoting the hierarchical basis of the world that *Ms.* was fighting against.

The fourth characteristic of traditional masculinity involved controlling women through exclusion and through direct influence. Initially, masculinity was performed through the exclusion of women and girls. One author remembered an example from his childhood. He wrote,

Another masculinity affirming ritual is simply for men to separate themselves from women. Part of being a man in our culture is not acting “like a woman.” By getting together as a group and explicitly excluding women, men affirm that they are different and better than women. I am reminded of nothing so much as my tree-house gang trying to place the foot and handholds leading up to the tree house so

that “no girls would get up there.” . . . It just made us feel manly and powerful to keep the girls out. (Fasteau M., 1972, p. 33)

Thus, traditional masculinity was directly linked to control over women. According to Fasteau, control of others (in particular women) was an essential component of traditional manhood. He wrote, “‘acting like a man’ in our society means being tough all the time, being emotionally invulnerable, and always being in control of yourself, your friends and ‘your woman’” (Fasteau, M., 1972, pp. 32-3). Therefore, an essential component of masculinity was the need to control and dominate women.

Hyper masculinity and notions of the need for absolute control over others were the key ingredient in masculine power. For example,

Much of the conceptualization involved in using power proceeds from the so called sports ethic “Winning isn’t the important thing, it’s the *only* thing.”

Winning is part of an equation that is only completed by concomitant defeat. Winning a woman, by any other name, for example, is about defeating women. Beating the Vietcong . . . means, simply, that no other relationship is possible with them or, actually, with anybody else.

White American males do not ever learn in this country to communicate with other people except in terms of power and the conscious or unconscious desire to overcome all those they encounter. (Riley, 1974, p. 97)

This aspect of masculinity was strictly enforced upon other men. In one article, a highly successful lawyer wrote about his experiences related to his wife's recent publishing success. He wrote,

It's funny how people react to you when your wife achieves some measure of success on her own. It's as though you had an affliction.

The comments started a couple of years ago when my wife wrote a book that was quite well received I began getting asked "How does it feel to be the husband of . . . ?"

The Question may be phrased differently . . . but It's a put down The other common variation is a frontal attack on my status as a wage earner The message is clearly that my wife's status reflects badly on my manhood. For what my challengers are really asking is, How does it feel to be married to a woman who is something besides your wife? Isn't it embarrassing? Can't you control your woman? Aren't you man enough?

. . . . Imagine putting down a woman for having allowed her husband to become successful We find it natural for a woman to gain status through her husband. Yet a man somehow loses status through the achievements of his wife. Presumably, for a man to enjoy the full bloom of manhood, his wife must be a wallflower. (Pogrebin, B. B., 1972, p. 26)

When Pogrebin violated traditional notions of masculinity by losing control of his wife, he was subjected to enormous social pressure and questioning of his masculinity. Thus, there was strong social pressure to control one's woman as a primary component of traditional masculinity. Those who dared violate those norms were punished and suffered socially among other men. In examining this attitude, Pogrebin wrote,

“A man's home is his castle.” Inside that framework there is someone who is not doing anything as worthwhile and not earning as much money-the Little Woman. No matter how modest his achievement, she is always there, achieving less. And that's supposed to demonstrate manhood.

A friend of mine explained it to me like this (man-to-man, of course): “The only way marriage can work is if the man is dominant. Otherwise, how could you resolve the one-to-one situation? Somebody has to be the top gun to break the impasse.” (Pogrebin, B. B., 1972, pp. 26-27)

Traditional masculinity required he-man type power that clearly differentiated men in opposition to the feminine and required domination of women in all arenas. To be feminine was to show weakness and thus was unacceptable to men who functioned in the rubric of traditional masculinity.

Sometimes this dominance was expressed through violence against women. In particular, articles in *Ms.* linked the problem of wife beating to the need for

masculine dominance and control. Initially *Ms.* sought to reveal the widespread nature of this violent expression of masculine control. One battered woman wrote,

Everybody worries about violence on the street. But there are more women beaten, bruised, broken and battered than anybody knows. It happens in their homes.

I was one of these battered women My husband would get drunk, come home, and take out all his frustrations, failures, and anger on me. (Name Withheld, 1976, p. 97)

By exposing the widespread occurrence of domestic violence, *Ms.* posited that this type of violence was the inevitable and natural result of the demands this system placed on men.

Because violence was extreme and produced victims, their testimony revealed images of monstrous, drunken husbands terrorizing their wives and children. One survivor wrote,

I remember episodes in my childhood of my father's rages at my mother and the sight afterward of my mother's bruised and swollen face. I remember looking into her eyes and seeing hurt and shame We all learned the sign of one of my father's impending attacks. He always drank alcohol first. To see my father like that- ugly, swaying, smelling of liquor-disgusted me. It took a long time before I stopped hating him and all men. (Name Withheld, 1976, p. 98)

After exposing the graphic and impactful nature of this violence, *Ms.* chose to print letters linking such actions to traditional hyper masculinity. One woman wrote,

The causes of wife beating are too deeply rooted in our societal values. My former husband and I spent thousands of dollars so that an eminent psychiatrist could tell me that by being afraid of my husband I was “programming him to be a bad boy.” The doctor almost convinced me that I was the kind of woman any real man would want to beat The counseling only worsened our situation because afterward my husband was able to say as he was beating me, “Dr. H says you want this.” (Name Withheld, 1976, p. 99)

In this case, the doctor did not see family violence as wrong. In fact, as a member of the dominant system, he condoned it. Rather than questioning concepts of masculinity that linked violence and control, the therapist blamed the wife for her husband’s violent impulses. Another article explained that traditional thinkers linked male violence to emasculation. In this example, strong women “emasculate young men” and are “figures of repressive, defeating authority” who “reinforce a man’s impulses toward aggression” and “make him prove his manhood” (Pogrebin L. C., 1974, pp. 49-50). Condoning violence and blaming women were expressions of the traditional masculine need for control and power, the need to prove their manhood regardless of the consequences. One man who attempted to rape a woman later argued that the motivations for male violence were rooted in failure to live up to masculine stereotypes. He wrote, “No one is born John Wayne. If that’s who you

believe you should be, you're going to end up committing some act of violence . . . one is rape." (Anonymous, 1972, pp. 22-23). Thus, traditional masculinity made men into violent devil figures who needed to victimize others to preserve their self identity.

As the examples illustrate, *Ms.* exposed the prevalence of violence against women and linked it to the system of traditional masculinity. Because men were supposed to control their women, wife beating was ignored or even condoned. Clearly, wife beaters were examples of extreme expressions of masculinity and descriptions of wife beating allowed *Ms.* readers to demonize the masculine system as a whole.

For feminists whose goal was equality, hyper masculinity subverted their entire system of values. Identification between feminists and hyper-masculinists was impossible because they believed in opposite versions of the good. To a traditional man, the good involved filling his role as provider and doing everything he could to maintain his dominance over those around him. Feminists wanted to break down and subvert these notions of naturalized inequality. Thus, traditional masculinity became the devil they were fighting against.

Inspiring Guilt: Undermining the Social and Biological Bases of Traditional Gender Roles

In addition to understanding the way that traditional masculinity oppressed women, it was important that this system be exposed as imperfect for men. Exposing the imperfections in the system was the foundation for inspiring guilt among those men who adhered to a masculinist ideology. Without guilt regarding their roles and

the ability to question the naturalness of their condition, traditional men had no reason to seek redemption in a feminist framework. Coverage of men in *Ms.* functioned to create guilt among men by problematizing the argument that gendered hierarchies were the naturally ordained good. The magazine primarily did this by indicting arguments for biological difference upon which traditional roles were built and demonstrating the ways that certain roles changed one's behavior, regardless of biological sex. In addition to questioning the extent of biological differences between the sexes, *Ms.* also began to question and indict the ways that traditional masculinity functioned for men. Primarily, they did this through testimony from men who did not fit into the traditional role prescriptions. Only by inspiring men to question their assumptions of masculinity could they inspire the guilt that was necessary for men to wish to be redeemed. In other words, questioning masculinity was necessary for men to desire redemptive change.

Questioning the Biological Basis of Difference

The first way that *Ms.* inspired guilt and undermined traditional masculine notions of the good was to argue against the legitimacy of the notion that all sex roles were rooted firmly in natural biological differences. They did this through pointing out flaws in the science supporting gendered difference and through presenting their own science to argue that stripped of gendered conditioning, men and women would be much more biologically similar than different.

One focus was on biology itself. For example, Dr. Estelle Ramey wrote an article discussing the fact that men also had monthly hormonal cycles and that these

cycles influenced men just as much as women's cycles influenced them. The aim of the argument was immediately clear as she argued that women's cycles were often used to support the notion of gender difference which meant the notion of women's inferiority. She wrote,

What is human and the same about males and females is much greater than the differences. I think we are all beginning to understand that "different"-when applied to females, or to males of other races-has been exaggerated and oddly interpreted to come out synonymous with inferior. (1972, p. 10)

In this article, she sought to address these claims of difference and the argument that, "females lack the consistent and calm behavior of males because women suffer from a form of periodic lunacy Men, according to this theory are natural leaders being endowed with a biologic stability that rivals that of the rocks." (1972, p. 10). Ramey then moved to indict this notion of difference by stating, "Men *do* have monthly cycles. The evidence of them may be less dramatic, but the monthly changes are no less real" (1972, p. 10). To support this claim, she cited several studies including a 16 year study of sex hormones in male urine.

The crux of the argument was that if women and men were biologically similar, there could be no natural justification for gendered hierarchies. In fact, she noted that those who believed in traditional masculinity were scrambling to exaggerate differences, even those based on pseudoscience. Ramey argued,

As a rational justification of sex discrimination becomes harder and harder to find . . . the need for the religion of masculine supremacy becomes greater and more intense. The newest wave of pseudo-biology . . . to hit the publishing business is . . . a self protective upsurge of this popular religion The religion rests on the belief that women are defective men. That they are structurally lacking, since they lack the rod of divinity. (1972, p. 10)

Interestingly, Ramey chose to use the word religion to describe the fervor felt by those who wished to be redeemed in the system of traditional masculinity and those who wished to redeem the system of traditional masculinity. Because, their world was built on notions of naturally gendered hierarchy, the only way to avoid guilt was by reifying beliefs about biological gender differences in any way possible.

Another article that undermined the notion of biological differences, suggested that both older mothers *and* older fathers pose risks to their offspring. It stated,

While it is well known that older mothers risk having children with chromosomal defects, less publicized is recent research relating congenital malformations and genetic diseases to advanced paternal age Genetic mutations seem to occur more frequently with the increasing age of a man, thus increasing the chance of a mutation being present in a sperm cell which can then cause a genetic disorder in his child. (Evans G. , 1976, p. 48)

Specifically, older fathers risked, “rare dominantly inherited diseases as Achondroplasia (a type of dwarfism), Marfan syndrome (height, vision. And heart abnormalities), Apert syndrome (facial and thumb deformities), and Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva (bony growths)” (Evans G. , 1976, p. 48). By arguing that older fathers also posed a risk to their children, Evans noted the biological similarity of men and women.

Another area of argument involved physical size and athletic ability. Here, *Ms.* argued that while there were actual differences in size and strength, these differences were exaggerated and encouraged by adherence to traditional gender roles. One article stated,

The male’s “overwhelming” superiority of strength and endurance may be, as Dr. Jack Wilmore of the University of California at Davis has written, more of an artifact of social or cultural restriction imposed on the female . . . than a result of true biological difference in performance potential between the sexes. (Scott, 1974, p. 49)

In a world where women were smaller and weaker due to cultural constructs and gender roles, this difference could be minimized by arguing that there was much less difference between trained athletes in each class (men and women) than there were differences across classes. Scott stated,

Despite the fact that the average man is larger, heavier and stronger than the average woman, it is now clear that those differences are far less than it formerly appeared. Evidence shows that the difference

between trained male and female athletes is far less than that between average or untrained men and women. And it is equally clear that differences of strength within either sex are greater than the differences between them. (Scott, 1974, p. 49)

If strength and size difference was merely a cultural artifact, the foundational assumption that women were naturally smaller and weaker and therefore needing to be protected and controlled could not stand.

By undermining one of the key ideological precepts upon which arguments in support of traditional gendered hierarchies were based, *Ms.* inspired guilt among adherents to the dominant social structure. In addition to undermining false notions of biological supremacy, *Ms.* needed to argue that traditional masculinity was a system in crisis, a system that also trapped men.

Traditional Masculinity in Crisis

The most effective way to challenge traditional masculinity was to demonstrate the ways that it limited and trapped men. By exposing the weaknesses of traditional masculinity, feminists could create a sense of disorder, undermining the principles of a masculinist culture. If *Ms.* could portray traditional masculinity as oppressive for men, men might identify with these limitations and seek a new value system that more accurately reflected their experience as men and gave them a chance to thrive. Because the traditional system of gender roles relied on hierarchical arrangements that allowed for only a few men to reap the full benefits of their position as men, many partially disenfranchised men might enter the stage of guilt

inspiring them to seek redemption through changing their notions of the good from a patriarchal gender structure to one that promoted equality.

To create disorder and expose the crisis in masculinity, the articles addressed six key areas where masculine stereotypes hindered actual men's lives. These were:

1. Some men did not meet stereotypical physical expectations; 2. Some men did not identify internally with traditional gendered roles; 3. Some men did not thrive in traditional masculine roles; 4. When men tried to choose alternate roles, they faced social and legal discrimination; 5. Traditional masculinity left men isolated and unable to communicate with one another in any meaningful way; 6. Traditional masculinity goaded men to violent acts in order to preserve their masculine face.

Each of these components helped to undermine the false assumption that all men who participated in traditional masculine structures were happily adjusted and benefitted from their status as men.

By identifying areas where traditional masculinity trapped and limited men, the basis for identification with feminists was set. In order for men to understand the problems with inequality, they must first understand that they suffered discrimination as well. Without this understanding, men could not identify with feminists and feminists could not identify with nontraditional men. Thus, a sense of unity or a corporate "we" could not be established. This suggests that establishing both identification *and* guilt were necessary factors in convincing men to not only seek redemption, but to seek it in an alternate system of order.

Initially, some articles addressed men's failure to meet physical expectations. In one article, Gross discussed the link between earning power and height in men. Men who were taller had greater income earning potential. Since he was short, he discussed his own anxiety in this regard. He stated, "Being somewhat undersized all through childhood, I worried if I'd reach that critical five feet eight inches that enabled you to be a cop or a fireman (these occupations being symbols for the worrisome question – 'Will I be a Real Man?')" (1975, p. 33). Men who were on the shorter end of the height curve would have to deal with the disconnect between their height and the stereotypes of hyper masculinity.

Another aspect of physical failure addressed in the magazine included impotence. Julty discussed this problem openly. He stated, "My sex role was supposed to be that of initiator, enticer, schemer, promise-maker – and I was failing to deliver. The penalty for nondelivery is guilt" (1972, p. 18). Literally, his failure to perform within the masculine order moved him to a state of guilt because his lived experience contradicted with his gender role expectations. Without his sexual potency, he felt powerless. He continued, "Potency means 'powerful.' Impotent means 'without power'" (1972, p. 18). Julty also recounted his understanding of the only acceptable and heroic paths to male weakness.

War battle wounds, disabilities are acceptable and "manly." Contrast this with the feeling of loss of manhood of the sexually disfunctioning man. He doesn't accept his problem and no one else will either.

Wives and lovers are confused . . . Physicians . . . pooh-pooh the man

out of the examining room. Psychiatrists . . . tell the man to concentrate on *not* thinking about it. Many men cannot discuss it with other men, nor with other women, for fear they will lose respect they cannot regain. The result is a silence . . . weighing down his organ yet further with guilt and shame. (Julty, 1972, p. 18)

Therefore, his impotence alienated him from other men. There was nowhere he could turn for help and be taken seriously. In this sense, he was unmanned, not by his sexual dysfunction, but by the hyper-masculinist world's reaction to it. Through this process, his locus of personal identification shifted from stereotyped, calcified masculine sex roles to identification as a human being. He wrote,

The way out of the maze is to tear up sex roles. Feelings of defeat toward this problem are not individual but social. The solution is political. Roles which offer dubious rewards in exchange for heavy responsibilities should be put aside. The true measure of a man is neither his war wounds nor the number of times he's bombed out in bed. His true measure is how he feels about himself and the human-beings around him. (Julty, 1972, p. 21)

In this case, physical inability to fulfill dominant masculine role expectations inspired guilt and disorder as Julty began to question his role as a man. This inspired him to both question traditional masculinity and look for another understanding of order, one that provided a social body with which he could identify, one that would not ridicule him.

In addition to physical inability to identify with hyper-masculine role expectations, some men recounted experiencing psychological dissonance between their self concept and what others expected of them. Specifically, Lester wrote about his experience as a child as his parents enforced traditional gendered role expectations. He wrote, “I wished I were a girl” (1973, p. 112). Lester elaborated on his reasons for his early, strong identification with female gender roles,

I tried to believe my parents when they told me I was a boy, but I could find no objective proof for such an assertion. Each morning during the summer as I curled up in the quiet of a corner with a book, my mother would push me out the back door and into the yard. And throughout the day as my blood was let as if I were a patient of 17th century medicine, I thought of the girls sitting in the shade of porches with their dolls, toy refrigerators and stoves. (Lester, 1973, p. 112)

At the time, he was jealous. However, as an adult he recognized that girls were also limited by enforced gender roles. Lester wrote,

Now, of course, I know that it was as difficult being a girl as it was being a boy As we forced our beautiful, free-flowing child-selves into those narrow, constricting cubicles labeled female and male. I tried, but I wasn’t good at being a boy. (Lester, 1973, p. 113)

Therefore, there were also psychological barriers that prevented some men from fully identifying with their masculinity. If they could not accept the masculine order internally, they were in a state of disorder and in need of redemption.

Even those who were willing did not always succeed in fulfilling their traditional masculine roles. One article recalled a puzzling experience that illustrated the alienation and guilt that could arise from one man's inability to succeed. Powers wrote,

My friend Edward . . . once told me a story about a boy he had known . . . They had been good friends but then lost track of each other . . . Years later, Ed saw his friend walking along a street in New York and called out his name. The friend looked up, saw and obviously recognized Ed, and then turned and ran. He did not just hurry away; he flat out ran.

The odd thing is that there was no connection of any sort between Ed and the other man except that they had been friends when young. So far as Ed knew, his friend had been involved in no scandals, was not wanted for any crime, did not owe Ed money. There could be only one explanation for his flight: he did not want to see an old friend. But, why run? . . .

When Ed first told me about that incident the mystery intrigued me, but now I think I know what happened, and it is the strength of the other man's feeling which interests me, his instant decision to get the hell out of there before he was trapped into talking over old times . . . I can see why a man . . . would turn and run from an old friend. Of

course! Who else can pose such a threat, bringing you face to face with what you once wanted to be. (Powers, 1975, p. 16)

In this story, the man who ran felt such intense guilt and anxiety associated with his personal failures, that he was unable to face an old friend. In fact, Powers generalized this state to all men except the most successful. He also identified the sense of alienation, self contempt and failure that could be felt by a man who did not fulfill his own ambitions. He continued,

A man's ambitions are more important to him, have more to do with the way he thinks about himself, and with how he behaves as a result, and finally with what he *is*, than anything else. Wives and children are far back in the field. Ambition and failure are the poles of the lives of men. People do not think much about success, which in any case is relative, but failure is absolute, at least subjectively, and men can easily spend two-thirds of a lifetime brooding on failure. The result is permanent moroseness, deadness of spirit, and self contempt.

The worst effect by far is the impossible burden it places on friendship. At the very moment when a man . . . most needs to consider himself part of a human community rather than a humbled Napoleon, he finds that he is nevertheless cutting himself off from old friends . . . Men set off on a solitary adventure of the self, and when they do not succeed, they drown. (Powers, 1975, p. 17)

In another article, the writer addressed the most extreme form of dealing with the guilt induced by financial failure. He wrote,

The most extreme and dramatic reaction to personal financial loss is suicide. I have seen several men to whom great financial losses of money represented such a great loss of self, of ego, and ultimately of masculine image, that life no longer seemed worth living. (Gould, 1973, pp. 18-19)

Suicide, in this case, illustrates individuals seeking redemption through the most extreme form of mortification or self punishment. In a state of disorder and extreme guilt, some men apparently found that it was the only way to respond. However, feminists were working to provide an alternate sense of order, a comic order in which failure was an acceptable experience rather than the root of tragedy.

The drive to succeed associated with traditional male sex roles also served as a trap, making it very difficult for men to choose alternate roles. One article was written anonymously by a man in middle management who wanted to find balance in his life and would have liked to spend more time with his family. In return for this balance, he would have been happy to remain in his job without additional promotions. However, he was trapped in a corporate system that measured a man by success, a system that was not equipped to deal with a man who did not constantly want to advance, a system in which he could not speak out for fear of suffering discrimination or job loss. In this sense, while he would have liked to challenge

stereotypical ideas of success, he could not because it would cause disorder in the system (Kendall, 1975).

The fourth area of difficulty in a traditional system of masculine hierarchy was men's inability to choose alternate roles. In the realm of parenthood, there were several articles written by men who had taken on primary care taking roles and faced challenges and discrimination because they were men in women's roles. Without changes to the dominant social and legal order, these men faced significant discrimination. One father wrote, "There are serious economic and legal barriers that must be removed if men are to become parents in more than name only." (Weigland, 1973, p. 29). In another example a male school teacher applied for maternity leave and was turned down because he was not a woman. He wrote,

I pointed out that women employees were being given certain benefits when they became parents and men employees were being denied those benefits. Under child-care leaves, women could teach as day to day substitutes. Men who may be forced to quit to assume paternity obligations are deprived of this chance to work, and, unlike women, cannot retain the status and privileges of a full time teaching license. Women on childcare leave are guaranteed for seven years of leave both their full time positions and placement in the same schools they had been teaching in. For me to simply quit meant losing the advantages of six years' seniority My application of leave was

rejected by the community school superintendent –because no man had ever applied before. (Ackerman, 1973, p. 118)

Eventually Ackerman ended up winning a legal battle. However, he chose to leave employment as a teacher in favor of writing for a newspaper where he could work at home. This case illustrates that men who desired to change roles were discriminated against legally. Therefore, non-traditional gender roles became another place where men might suffer alienation and guilt caused by nonconformity with the dominant order. This nonconformity produced experiences which allowed men to identify with feminist calls for equality.

Additionally, several articles highlighted the alienation and fear that was normal in traditional masculinist structures where all men were potential enemies and all women were inferior. One man wrote, “Many men are coming to realize that sex-role privilege inflicts enormous damage on them, turning half of humanity into their subordinates and the other half into their rivals, isolating them and making fear and loneliness the norm of their existence” (Roache, 1972, p. 25). This alienation, isolation and guilt were fed by men’s learned communication deficits. Fasteau argued, that while many men supported women’s demands for political equality and sought to treat women equally, they needed to understand that “the changes being brought about by feminism will directly benefit men as well as women” (Fasteau M. , 1972a, p. 16). He argued that men’s communication deficits presented a serious challenge to male liberation. He wrote, “because men have not yet begun to talk to each other honestly, men’s liberation is still just an idea” (Fasteau M. , 1972a, p. 16).

Fasteau also linked men's communication deficit to the traditional hyper-masculine role in which,

“Real men” are never passive or dependant, always dominant in relationship with women or other men, and don't talk about or directly express feeling; especially feelings that don't contribute to dominance Our sense of isolation is also an independent and critical element of sex role conditioning itself. We are taught not to communicate our personal feelings and concerns. (Fasteau M. , 1972a, p. 16)

In a traditional world, communication would undermine the stereotypical notion of what it was to be a man. Since hyper-masculinity relied on projecting strength, communicating one's humanity was prohibited. Fasteau wrote, “talking personally . . . involves revealing doubts, plans which may fail . . . making ourselves vulnerable. That was too risky” (1972a, p. 16). Thus, in order to find their inner humanity, men must also learn to communicate. He continued,

As part of the women's process of gaining the freedom to be full human beings, they are talking to each other about subjects almost forbidden to men. And in so doing they have thrown a spotlight on the obstacles to communication among men. We ought to *want* to break through these barriers for the pleasure of getting to know ourselves and each other better. Until we do so, men's liberation will remain an idea instead of a movement. (Fasteau M. , 1972a, p. 16)

In sum, traditional masculinity trapped men as much as it subordinated women. The specific symptoms of this trap included isolation, inability to talk and share with other men, and the need to maintain dominance by refusing to expose any weakness.

Finally, traditional masculinity sometimes resulted in violent expression caused by challenges to one's manhood. *Ms.* linked violence to men's lack of fulfillment and inability to function in the face of rigid societal demands. One woman wrote,

Life in America is competitive and insecure. For example, if a boss gives a man a hard time, there is nothing he can do about it, except take it out on his wife or kids. There aren't enough jobs to go around, so he can't quit and the job he has is most likely boring and unfulfilling. So after work he goes down to the bar and has a few. With his inhibitions soaked in alcohol he goes home and takes out his frustrations on his family.

If we seriously want to end wife-beating, rape, murder and other crime, then we must change our society into a cooperative, secure, easygoing one. (Name Withheld, 1976, p. 97)

Thus, men who had trouble integrating into society learned that they could exhibit absolute power and control by beating their wives. In Burkean terms they sought to redeem themselves in a traditional masculine sphere through violent scapegoating of those who were weaker than they were.

Ms. clearly sought to create a sense of disorder and guilt among as many men as possible. It also sought to expose failures in the traditional system. If men could identify with experiences shared by other men in the magazine, more men might seek to be redeemed into a new feminist order.

Presenting a God Term: Equality as the Ultimate Order

To understand the order proposed in the pages of *Ms.*, it is necessary to understand their god term, equality. *Ms.* sought to change the social order by extending liberal notions of equality in legal and social spheres to all human beings. Articles and letters about the ERA best typified this goal. One man wrote, in a letter to the editor,

The ERA is very important. If half of the population is automatically excluded from important leadership roles, then the quality of leadership in our society is lowered. If Women's Liberation groups put more stress on ending role-stereotyping for both men and women . . . Then I think that men would be more receptive to change. The average man is really no better off as far as power to change the laws and social customs that govern the structure of society, than the average woman. Yet, certain segments of the Women's Liberation Movement have seemed to picture the average man as some sort of devil, who holds vast power and greedily guards this power to prevent women from gaining equal rights and opportunities.

The cause of Women's Liberation is really the cause of liberating both men and women from stereotyping.

I hope your magazine can convey this so that the ERA can become a reality before our species goes the way of the dinosaur.

(Paulson, 1976, pp. 7-8)

This example recognized the limiting nature of inequality for both men and women and *Ms.*' attempts to problematize masculinity for men as well as for women. This broad definition of gender equality and the ability to deconstruct stereotypes was necessary to broaden the concept of the good in the movement and to allow men as supporters rather than as demonized stereotypes.

Ms. also featured articles designed to articulate the concept of equality. Both articles addressed in this section were written by men who were already part of the corporate feminist "we." Through these articles, *Ms.* was not only able to establish a primary goal for the organization of social norms and values; they also began the process of presenting men in the movement with whom men outside the movement could more closely identify. Both articles also relied on celebrity influence as the chosen defenders of the ERA were Howard Cosell and Alan Alda.

Cosell argued that equality is a fundamental American value that could benefit society and a whole. He stated,

It relates to the betterment of society, it relates to the principles upon which this nation was supposed to be founded You do what is right and you stand up for what is right We still have not fulfilled

the promise of the notion that all people are equal under the law, because certainly the blacks are not, and women are not It's long since past time in this society that women were treated coequally with men and I don't think they are in many important areas of human existence. (1975, p. 78)

Cosell's association with the hyper-masculinist world of sports made his endorsement of masculinity based in principles of equality particularly powerful.

Alda made both practical and ideological arguments. He said, "The ERA would simply be a sex-blind leveler of laws which discriminate either in favor of women or men. All our lives will be improved both legally and personally" (1976, p. 48). Appealing to men's self interest, he identified areas where men were discriminated against legally. He wrote, "It may surprise some men to realize there are many laws that now deny them the same rights and privileges that women enjoy. Men whose wives work are excluded from retirement benefits that are received as a matter of course by women whose husbands work" (1976, p. 49). According to Alda, other benefits would accrue from including women in the work force. He argued,

A more important benefit will be that men's working conditions will probably improve when there are more women on the job. Without ascribing women any mystical and unattainable qualities of gentleness and wisdom, I think I have observed that where men work without women there is just a little less warmth, a little less laughter, a little less relaxation. There seem to be "feminine" qualities that have for

too long been absent from our working environments. It is a small but significant point that men, with all their bravado, have seldom had the courage to stick a flower on their desk. (Alda, 1976, p. 98)

Making women equal in personal relationships would benefit men as well as women.

Alda wrote,

A longer-range benefit . . . is the pleasure we will derive from the companionship of women who finally have the ability to make free choices in their lives and to develop themselves to their fullest potential. A number of men have noticed that those women who have spent years fulfilling the approved submissive role can make men pay for that dependence Women's independence will set men free. (Alda, 1976, p. 98)

Indeed, principles of equality had the practical potential to empower both men and women. He continued,

Some of the most personal benefits to men may be changes on the way we think, in the shifting of our expectation, the relinquishing of our stereotypes . . . the ERA . . . will finally commit the country fully and publically to equality under the law. As men increasingly fill jobs as secretaries, airline flight attendants, telephone operators, and receptionists we may find ourselves less likely to presume that people who fill these jobs are supposed to be servile, anonymous, and eager to fulfill our sexual fantasies. Similarly, as women fill traditionally male

roles as police chiefs, gas station attendants, baseball players, and bankers, we may also begin to realize that wisdom, aggressiveness, and physical courage are not solely male attributes. The pressure to provide these qualities all by ourselves will be taken from men's shoulders. We can still stand strong and brave, but we won't have to feel we are the only ones who are. (Alda, 1976, p. 98)

Thus, the ideal order of equality could free men from the limitations and burdens imposed in a stultifying traditional system.

In addition to practical effects, Alda clearly identified the ideological basis for privileging equality for all as one that arose from the most basic and American ideals, justice, equality and citizenship under the law. In this sense, the ERA represented the ultimate value of equality in all aspects of personal and social life. For example, in the context of child custody decisions, Alda wrote,

The new fairness principle will give a winning edge neither to men nor women, but to fairness itself. Each case will be determined according to the special factors in that case. And when parents dissolve their marriage, the fairness principle will look to children's needs in rendering justice, not to the gender of the parentsWhatever the amendment does, it will give all fathers, rich and poor, single and married, the satisfaction of seeing their daughters and sons enjoying the benefits of full citizenship and equal opportunities. (Alda, 1976, p. 50)

Finally, he appealed to the constitutional grounding of equality as a guiding principle and the obligation to do what is right, regardless of the potential for personal gain.

He wrote,

With your vote you have the opportunity to pass on to future generations the same kind of shelter for human dignity that the men who voted for the first ten amendments passed on to us. Perhaps not every one of those men benefited personally from the Bill of Rights, but they all had one great overriding benefit-they had the knowledge that they did what was right. (Alda, 1976, p. 98)

With equality as a god term, respect for others as human beings regardless of gender became the primary component the feminist order envisioned by *Ms.*

Once guilt and disorder had been recognized and a new order had been established, it became necessary for men to be redeemed so that they could be acceptable supporters of feminist ideals. This happened in two ways. Initially, men practiced mortification in the pages of the magazine as they confessed and punished their past selves for their failure to uphold equality and their participation in traditional norms. After recognizing their past wrongs and seeing the value of equality, they demonstrated the possibility of transformation. Additionally, a sense of stasis was achieved through women testifying to their husband's feminist credentials. The second aspect of redemption, victimage (the punishing of others also known as scapegoating), was used to indict sexists who refused to change. Several contributors suggested that women could not live with men who refused to redeem themselves. In

this sense, an individual woman, inspired by experience and the magazine might choose to eliminate the man, who refused to embrace equality, from her life.

However, *Ms.* readers did not literally kill the men they scapegoated. The victimage was symbolic. Because the intent and practice was not to literally eliminate sexists, the victimage as practiced in *Ms.* was comic because it allowed competing notions of order.

Redemption: Confession, Mortification and the Will to Change

Initially, the process of redemption involved the use of testimonials by both men and women illustrating individual men's ability to cast off outdated notions of masculinity and accept a new, more feminist, role based in equality. This process involved the men themselves confessing, admitting their wrongdoing and demonstrating change. To prove that this change could occur and would be durable, women testified about living with men who identified with reformed notions of masculinity. Not only was it possible to make new masculinity work, but men became heroes for endorsing and supporting their wives. As heroes, they served as examples for other men, took on greater status among feminist thinkers and were rewarded with public recognition of their change. This process of redemption was designed to teach others that it was possible to change if one willed it.

Confessing in the pages of *Ms.* was a particularly prevalent theme in the letters section but occurred in articles as well. The initial step in the process of redemption was for men to confess their sins. Then they needed to disavow former,

sexist versions of themselves. In these confessions they often described their moments of disorder and guilt. One man wrote,

The fact that I received a letter with a salutation of “Dear Sister” made me wonder how the situation if for women who receiver mail headed “Dear Sir.” Maybe it’s a little farfetched, but it opened my eyes a little.

What little I know about Women’s Liberation, I agree with It seems to me that male attitudes toward females are changing. I know I’ve changed mine. (Name Withheld, 1972b, p. 11)

In this case, the letter writer felt guilt inspired by a simple moment of identification with women. Based on that sense of disquiet, he changed his attitude.

In a second example of a confession, a man recounted his experience assuming his wife’s role in the family as she suffered a serious illness. As part of a two income family, he wrote, “we share the chores around the house as much as any couple these days and I always felt that I did my share” (Scult, 1974, p. 4). However, his understanding changed when his wife was ill and not able to perform as usual. He wrote,

I cooked the meals, washed the dishes, tended to her needs, did the laundry, cleaned the house, and spent time with the kids I slowly began to realize how much I, as a man, was free from chores around the house and from the feeling of responsibility. I certainly did my part, but it was always in the spirit of “helping my wife,” who of course, had the major responsibilities I now feel very strongly

that most men do not realize the burdens their wives (partners, lovers, roommates) carry. We men are so used to being waited on cooked for, and having our clothes washed for us that we don't even give the matter serious thought other than "helping out." (Scult, 1974, p. 4)

In this example, his ability to identify with his wife's experience led him to the realization that he took their gender roles for granted. The letter also displayed a sense of mortification (self punishment) as the writer indicted his former assumption that his primary household duty was to help his wife out when he felt like it.

While the previous man's writing does not provide a strong sense of a will to change, Levine wrote an article containing confession, mortification and a demonstration of his will to change. His confession detailed his decision to seek out a men's group. Levine recalled, "I got myself into a men's group. I didn't want to be left behind" (1974, p. 14). Interestingly, his decision was motivated out of a sense of disorientation and guilt which was inspired because he did not meet the expectations of a system that was in flux around him. Levine wrote,

I was in serious danger of becoming near extinct as I settled down with my chauvinism, my role playing, my fantasies, my fears In the world of men, I was alone, jealous, angry, untrusting, and uptight My ease with any woman was based on her ability to worship me. I was a *man* she was merely a woman. (1974, p. 14)

The above excerpt demonstrates both confession of his harmful attitudes and mortification for such attitudes. The process of confessing to sexist attitudes, ideals

and actions in a feminist publication was clearly an act of mortification as men willfully displayed their worst flaws in front of a potentially unforgiving or even vengeful audience.

The third part of the redemptive process, the will to change, was exemplified later in Levine's article. During the process of participation with the men's group, Levine contracted cancer. He felt that he emerged from both the men's group and his health crisis as a new man. He noted,

I've been freed from cancer, but the experience forced a new look at things. And things look all the way different to better to beautiful. Things with myself, with me and my wife, with my children, my friends, the people I work with. All these people haven't changed, but I am changing. Along with the Monday night men's group. (1974, p. 14)

Thus, Levine's article recounted the components of a redemptive process of confession, mortification and the will to change. Through this process, he was able to have a more authentic relationship with both himself and the people around him.

Another man, who confessed on the pages of *Ms.*, admitted that his initial goal in reading the magazine was a bit of humor. Wodka ordered his *Ms.*, "fully expecting to get a great piece of entertainment by way of laughing at the stereotyped articles on Women's Lib" (Wodka, 1972, p. 4). However, his attitude changed, he confessed, "Boy was I wrong," noting,

What I received was a great piece of news/information/entertainment of a type I had never expected. Because I am a male, I can't fully appreciate the problems of women

After reading Volume 1, Number 1, I can plainly see that there is a problem. (Wodka, 1972, p. 4)

Another man expressed a similar example of conversion through contact with *Ms.* He wrote that after reading *Ms.*, "I . . . find myself stunned by my phoniness" (Barbieri, 1972, p. 6). The sense of embarrassment and mortification was almost palpable in his choice of words. As Barbieri continued, his reasons for remorse became more apparent. He wrote, "I like to think of myself as liberal, willing to fight for women's rights, but I guess I never really believed that your rights were the same as mine" (1972, p. 6). His false consciousness gave way to a real understanding and sense of empathy. Barbieri explained,

It is incredibly difficult to put into words the way I feel. I was always taught by my parents, both of whom work, that women and men were equal; however, in school and society in general it was quite obvious to me that men were more equal. Man was the founder of society, and a *good* woman was his helpmate. It was always an ego trip to walk into a room of people and to know you were better than at least half of them, that half being women. I thought I had outgrown this attitude. I find, after reading *Ms.*, that I haven't really.

Hopefully your magazine will do more than just raise the
consciousness of women I know that it has raised my
consciousness. (Barbieri, 1972, p. 6)

Barbieri and some of the other examples cited did not fully demonstrate a capacity for enduring social change. Their letters primarily engaged in confession and mortification without fully demonstrating a sustained will to change.

However, multiple writers demonstrated a new found sense of commitment to equality. In one case, Ackerman, the teacher who had attempted to apply for maternity leave, detailed the results of his choice to pursue a career where he could work from home and more actively parent. He wrote,

I've never questioned whether this fight has been worth it. I know I'm growing with my family because I'm there to participate. I'm not the absentee landlord of my household, but a real part of our family. Most essential, I have come to love, accept, and respect my wife, who has made a full time commitment to the household and children, as I never had before. I fully realize the importance of what she does and how she does it. (1973, p. 119)

The result of his will to change, his commitment to being part of a new notion of fatherhood, was a life richer in many ways.

Another example demonstrating the will to change was in the context of politics. A well known campaign manager wrote about his first experience running a woman's campaign. Initially, he wrote, "I just couldn't picture a woman doing the

type of campaigning I've always advocated: plant gates, shopping centers, subway stops; really talking to the people" (Bruno & Feuerlicht, 1973, p. 14). However, his experience changed his attitude towards candidates to one of equal assessment. He continued,

Ann Klein won't be the only woman in my career. Before when I was asked if I would work for a woman, I would laugh. Now, I would check her out, just as I do with a male candidate, to see what qualities she has. Not only did I admire Ann Klein as a campaigner, but I think she would have made a hell of a governor. She was the first female candidate I ever worked for, but, I hope I'll meet another Ann Klein again. (Bruno & Feuerlicht, 1973, p. 15)

In this example, the campaign manager demonstrated a will to change, to choose equality, the primary feminist good.

In addition to detailing a will to change and greater respect from women, *Ms.* needed to present a new masculinity, one that redefined men as powerful and still fully masculine. This new masculinity was portrayed on some covers. Most notably, the May 1974 portrayed a father embracing his baby (see figure 1).¹ The text banner across the picture read "The fathering instinct." Thus, new masculinity embraced a nurturing accessible father.

¹ From "The Fathering Instinct," by B. King, 1974, *Ms.*, II, Cover photograph of Ray and Rachel Anne Rivera. Copyright by Liberty Media for Women, LLC, which is wholly owned by the Feminist Majority Foundation. Reprinted with permission.

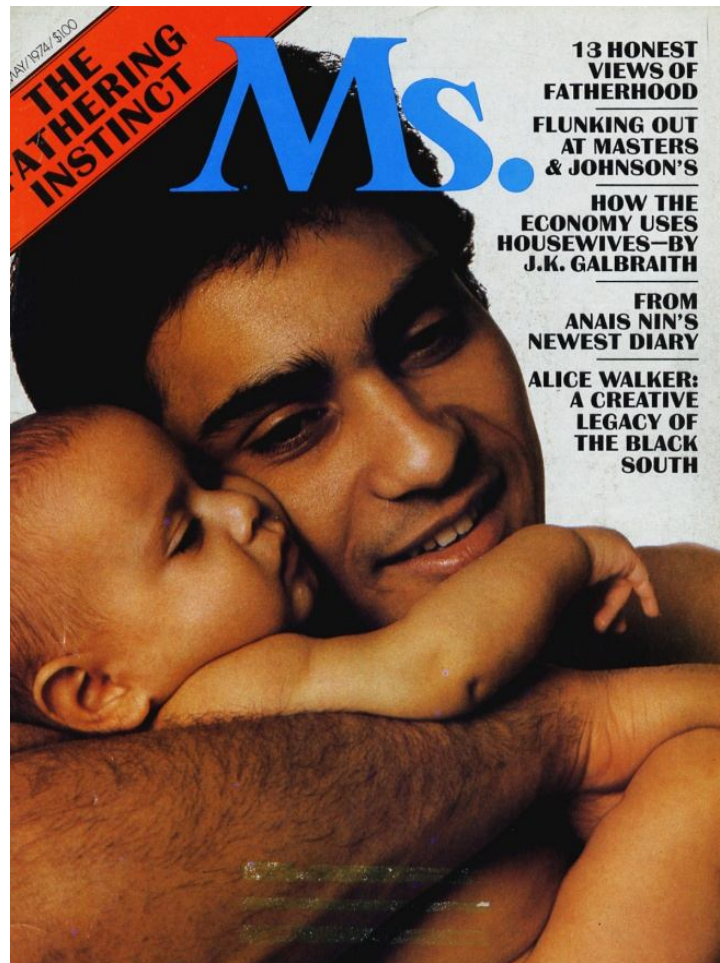


Figure 1. The Fathering Instinct portrayed a father embracing his baby daughter.

New masculinity was also exemplified by men who rejoiced in their wives' successes. Earlier in this chapter, I quoted Pogrebin, a successful lawyer whose masculinity was challenged because his wife wrote a book gaining public recognition. Pogrebin detailed the benefits of his choice to treat his wife equally. He wrote,

But the main pleasure, and most terrific, is my freedom from guilt. I didn't obliterate her identity, and she didn't sacrifice herself to mine. She continues to be her own person, with her own mind and ambitions.

In short, like the late Duke of Windsor, I gave up the throne for the woman I love. Call me a feminist dupe. I think it was the manly thing to do. (Pogrebin B. B., 1972, p. 27)

Thus, a new sense of masculinity emerged as men demonstrated a will to change. Rather than finding self esteem in the isolated world of power and control, men were able to find it through connection with others (including women).

Extending the Redemptive Metaphor: Forgiveness as Entrée to a New Social Order

One aspect of redemption that Burke does not fully explicate is forgiveness. In addition to the internal process of redemption which Burke details, I argue that there is an external component, called forgiveness. Logically, in order to become a functional adherent to a new social paradigm, one must gain the acceptance of those who currently function in said paradigm. To be admitted, past wrong doers must obtain forgiveness from group members. Forgiveness requires that the members of the group accept the act of redemption as sufficient for an individual to join the group. In the case of *Ms.*, this external component made it necessary to not only print testimonials from men citing their conversion, but to also print testimonies from women verifying it. Additionally, these letters held men up as heroes, as extraordinary men who bucked the hyper-masculinist system in a very sincere and concrete fashion, one that often empowered the women around them.

The primary problem with accepting men as feminists was women's distrust of men as the dominant expressers of masculine power in the traditional sex role system. However, one woman wrote that she could "no longer deny men the

possibility of goodness” and that she had “found some men who behave well” (Harrison, 1974, p. 43). She argued that creating an oppositional relationship with all men actually would “doom” her to her “own victimization forever (Harrison, 1974, p. 43). This reflects a nuanced understanding of men as individuals rather than the hyper-masculinized stereotype. It is also worth noting that the author recognized a link between total demonization of men and continued victimization of women.

Another writer made the case for male participation in the movement. He wrote, “A great number of women are reluctant to accept the existence of genuine political and spiritual feminism on the part of men” (Ward, 1975, p. 8). In arguing for greater acceptance of men in the movement, he argued, “I believe a significant number of men have now reached a very high level of consciousness, political involvement, and commitment to the feminist movement” (Ward, 1975, p. 8). This argument for admission of men recognized both men’s attempts at feminist redemption and the growing impact of the feminist movement. Ward noted, “the Women’s movement has become too important to male feminists on a personal and political level, for them to be bulldozed out of at least ideological participation” (1975, p. 8). Thus, men’s new feminist credentials in concert with the growth of the women’s movement and its increasing political impact, made admission of men to the feminist ranks necessary. It was also desirable so that the women’s movement could avoid enforcing new, reversed hierarchies upon men. Ward wrote,

I also believe that the Movement has reached a degree of autonomy that will allow the introduction of men into a larger role . . . as

opposed to the “invisible” one in which men have had to sheepishly sit by when “men” and the masculine mentality are under fire. (1975, p. 8)

The creation of a new masculinity and process of redemption made it possible to forgive reformed men and admit them to the movement.

Forgiveness played itself out on the pages of *Ms.* in several forums. The magazine staff was conscious of the need to demonstrate a new masculinity rooted in the values of feminist equality. To this end, the editors placed a classified advertisement seeking examples of “Unsung Heroes” of the feminist movement, men. In a world where many feminist women’s experiences with men were filled with negativity and conflict, there was a need to demonstrate that men could and did, in some cases, change. Thus, the classified ad read,

Ms. is compiling profiles of men who are supportive of women and the Women’s Movement, and whose work, energy, philosophy, and lifestyles are helping to change American politics, arts, industry, business, technology, education, marriage, and child rearing. If you know such a man, we’d like to hear from you. (*Ms.*, 1975, p. 72)

The response to the advertisement was overwhelming and came primarily from the wives of feminist husbands. One woman predicted this response when she wrote, “I hope you’re getting a lot of letters from women whose Unsung Heroes are their husbands; mine is, and I’d like to think he’s not alone” (Powledge, 1975, p. 73). Indeed, he was not.

The letters provided long, detailed stories of both their husbands' personal challenges and heroic feats. One woman wrote of her husband's frustrations over a period of years as he tried to "fit into the male success model" (Onaitis, 1975, p. 72). Since she was already a thriving and successful journalist, they decided he should become a "househusband." She wrote,

Ken does all the nitty gritty household chores, since he is at home all day. He's an excellent cook People who are critical of Ken say, "What a waste of a college education." But, he is quick to point out that people don't say that about women who choose to stay home. (Onaitis, 1975, p. 72)

In this case, her husband was a hero because he was willing to forgo traditional gender role expectations and to focus on what worked best for them as a family despite other people's criticism.

In another example, a woman detailed her husband's experience as a feminist in the most hyper-masculine of all institutions, the military. She wrote,

My husband and I are both captains in the Army Judge Advocate General's Corps. Before that, we went to law school together. There he began to compare our relationship which was that of equals, to the attitudes of the law students, students' spouses, professors, and the law. From the beginning he took a personal stand-subject to much ridicule-against the blatant and subtle sexism there.

. . . He has participated in many local National Organization for Women activities, worked hard for the Equal Rights Amendment in Louisiana and sustained a men's consciousness-raising group. The tenor of his thinking had changed from one with a focus on women to one of human liberation, particularly men's liberation

We now live in Germany, in the midst of one of the last bastions of manliness-the Army. Again my husband, Rick, has presented his opinions, explaining our relationship to other men who have never been exposed to personal liberation. These men still talk about women burning bras and equate the Women's Movement with promiscuity. It takes a great deal of courage to set an example in the face of the Green Machine. (Williams, 1975, pp. 72-73)

In this case, a male feminist publically maintained his views in the most masculine of environments, the army.

There were many examples of everyday heroes practicing and forging notions of new masculinity. There was Fred, a writer, who, without being asked, "Simply took over the domestic end of things" because his wife had a strenuous full time job and a long commute (Powledge, 1975, p. 73). There was also Leo Bandsma who supported his wife as she went to electronics school. She wrote,

While I have been in full time classes, he has kept house and helped out with my child (*real help*, not just plunking the kid in front of the TV) so that I could have regular quiet time for study. He has also built

a functional workroom/study for me He expresses pride in me and my accomplishments and feels no resentment in my need to do these things. (He has even brought home equipment for me to repair, and when it's fixed, he proudly announces, "My wife did it.")

. . . . I think the example set by Leo gets through to the other men he works with, because of his inner strength and self assurance.

He is an unsung hero who I'm proud to know, to love, and to have as a friend. (Bandsma, 1974, p. 73)

These examples represent only a few of the published letters not to mention the unpublished ones. Compelling personal testimonies such as these from women who had experienced genuine interaction with truly feminist men opened a space allowing for forgiveness of reformed hyper-masculinists and for acceptance of feminist men.

Competing Systems of Order: Refusal to Seek Redemption & Victimage

While many men were redeemed and found acceptance living with the feminist women in their lives, many others did not feel guilt and could not be inspired to reject traditional masculinity. In response, *Ms.* provided an alternative; readers could eliminate such men from their lives. Here, women engaged in symbolic scapegoating of traditionally masculine men. Initially, women could scapegoat men by removing them from their lives. Pogrebin cited one woman, Susan Jenkins, who described some of the characteristics of her husband that led her to choose life without him. Susan said,

I got seven kids, some old enough to work, some still babies

When he worked my husband James worked hard, but more often than that he drank hard and the money went. Then he'd beat me and forget he did it. Or disappear for days then come home and sweet-talk me or bring me perfume. I got so I couldn't count on him for anything. One time I was going to a church group meeting about setting up childcare and free lunches for little kids. James was home then so I asked him to mind the two babies. While I was gone, some men had come by, and James just went off with them without thinking. I found the kids all alone-hollering, all hungry, and messy in their diapers.

I've got rid of him for good now. I do just fine with the kids and me. I think going on welfare is better than going crazy in that man's marriage. (Pogrebin L. C., 1977, p. 47)

Susan Jenkins was not alone. In the same article Pogrebin identified the key question in relation to men in feminists' lives. She wrote,

"How do I change him?" must be rephrased into "What if he refuses to change?" Until a discontented woman entertains the possibility of ending her relationship with her man, she won't know which changes really matter to her and where to draw the line. (Pogrebin L. C., 1977, p. 86).

Thus, considering the possibility of eliminating a man from one's life gave women the power and control over their lives necessary to allow men to be redeemed or to scapegoat and eliminate them from their interpersonal relationship.

Ms. advised that women who lived with men who felt that "your activities mustn't inconvenience him, your conduct mustn't embarrass him, and your raised consciousness, mustn't deprive him of ego support and attention when he wants it" were living with men who were "hooked on male privilege and convinced that sex-role division of labor was transmitted from God's mouth to his ear" (Pogrebin L. C., 1977, p. 85). In these cases, *Ms.* suggested that women consider leaving their relationship. Pogrebin wrote,

A truly resistant "impossible" husband presents not just a series of hurdles, but a brick wall. He sees your gains as his loss. He complains that he went into this marriage with certain guarantees and you have no right to renege. Changes-yours, and certainly *his*-were never part of the deal, as he makes perfectly clear with statements like "No wife of mine is gonna take a job!" Or, "I bring in the money, I make the decisions!" Or, "None of my other women ever complained about how I fuck." If you're living with this type of man, perhaps the only thing you should consider changing is your address. (Pogrebin L. C., 1977, p. 86)

In extreme cases, symbolic scapegoating and actual elimination of men from women's lives was recommended. This theme also maintained the threat of

traditional masculinity as a means on motivating women within the movement. The continued existence of a competing system provided an external devil figure motivating women to continue their social and political activism.

Conclusion

While feminists have been criticized because they failed to theorize masculinity, *Ms.* recognized need to include men in the feminist movement in order to promote enduring social change. Since men were associated with hyper masculinity and the dominant system, *Ms.* needed a way to present sympathetic men that would make them acceptable as supporters of feminism. Thus, the articles published in *Ms.* functioned to create a process of secular redemption for men who wished to ally themselves with Women's Liberation.

In this chapter, I used a Burkean cycle of guilt and redemption to analyze the interaction between competing systems; feminism and traditional gender roles. Articles in *Ms.* followed a redemptive cycle as they: identified a devil figure in the concept of traditional masculinity; criticized the function of traditional masculinity by challenging the biological basis of gender difference; undermined traditional masculinity by showing the ways that it limited and constrained men; identified the unifying god term of equality, allowed men to engage in a redemptive process including victimage (scapegoating) and mortification; and allowed traditional masculinity to endure as an external, motivating threat.

While I use Burke's cycle of guilt and redemption as a basis for a functional understanding of *Ms.*' interaction with men, I extend Burke's analysis by examining

redemption in the context of competing moral systems and including the concept of forgiveness. While Burke comments that people may abandon their notion of the good in favor of a competing system, his analysis focuses on redemption within rather than across systems. However, a sense of guilt or disorientation in one moral system can result in an individual choosing to seek redemption either in the original system or in a variety of competing systems. In this case, feminism and patriarchy held opposite notions of the good (power and control over others vs. equality for all people). Consequently, the choice to abandon a traditional masculinist ideology was a means of resolving guilt engendered by the traditional patriarchal system. Importantly, the system of equality also allowed men to blame their guilt on the system itself rather than on their personal choices.

Second, it is important to extend Burke's system by adding the concept of forgiveness as an external response to redemption. While Burke analyzes redemption primarily as a systemic justification for political action or as an individual internal psychological response to a dominant system, he does not extend his analysis to include the forgiveness necessary to gain admittance into alternate systems of the good. In the case of *Ms.*, providing the space for men to achieve forgiveness for patriarchal sins, made it possible for men who wanted to change from a traditional concept of masculinity to one that embraced gender equity to become participants in or supporters of the feminist movement. Thus, *Ms.* engaged men in a way that cleared the path for their admission to a feminist system.

Chapter 4: Picturing the Many Faces of Feminism in *Ms.*

Introduction

Ms. functioned to broaden the reception of feminist messages by delivering these messages to mainstream American women. Prior to *Ms.*, feminist publications were smaller, more specialized and more local in their reach. As the first mass mediated feminist magazine in the United States, *Ms.* carried a heavy burden. If *Ms.* failed, feminists would have more difficulty spreading feminist thoughts and ideas; if the magazine succeeded, it could become a force for political change. When the preview issue was being prepared, the staff feared that the appeal of *Ms.* might not be as widespread as they hoped which would indicate that the magazine and perhaps feminism itself lacked broad appeal among mainstream American women. *Ms.* editors recalled their nervous anticipation of how the first issue would be received. They wrote, “Could there really be 100,000 women in the country who wanted this unconventional magazine?” (1972a, p. 6). They had been “listening to doomsayers so long that . . . [they] . . . began to doubt it” (p. 6). However, they were overjoyed when the first printing of 300,000 copies sold out in eight days (p. 6). Additionally, they received 20,000 letters in response to the preview issue and 50,000 initial subscription orders (p. 6). While the magazine staff was energized to confront the various logistical problems they faced, they focused on celebrating their ability to connect with the readers to “explore this new world” (p. 7).

It is important to note that *Ms.* was feminist but it was not overly intellectual. Instead of dense theory, the editors and writers relied on their “gut experience” to

argue that they and many others felt that woman's place, including female social and political roles, needed to change because women "had been on the bottom of hierarchies for too long" (p. 6). The editors noted that, "more out of instinct than of skill, the women of *Ms.* had tapped an emerging and deep cultural change that was happening to us, and happening to our sisters" (p. 6). They added, "We want a world in which no one is born into a subordinate role because of visible difference whether that difference is race or sex After that, we cherish our differences" (p. 7). Thus, one goal of the magazine was to reflect the experiences of women in America. In the first issue, the editors described the multiple life circumstances of each of their staff members and stated that as individuals they were "not a bad composite of the American woman" (p. 7). This desire to represent the American woman's experience in both who they were and what they wrote was a guiding force throughout the first five years of *Ms.*

In this chapter, I argue that the broad appeal of the magazine was founded on their ability to define and validate a multiplicity of women's experiences. In conducting the analysis for this chapter, I completed a broad inductive analysis of the covers, editorial content, letters and articles to determine, according to *Ms.*, what it meant to be a woman in America in the middle 1970s. Initially, *Ms.* raised readers' consciousness by portraying the injustices faced by women in all realms of our society. They legitimized women's feelings of discontent in traditional roles by tackling a multiplicity of problems associated with traditional female roles.

However, a single focus on victimization would have been doomed to fail. While *Ms.* needed to legitimize women's experiences of oppression, they also sought to provide an alternate vision of what womanhood could be. This vision included the many faces of the feminist woman. Through these various representations of women, *Ms.* transformed the image of women from one of passivity to one of activity. Rather than being a passive victim of her life circumstances, a *Ms.* feminist was a doer, an activist. Ultimately, *Ms.*' choice to include many women's experiences allowed *Ms.* to resonate with a wide audience. However, some readers, who held radical or highly conservative positions within feminism, criticized *Ms.* for the varied and sometimes contradictory approaches. I conclude that, rather than exposing hypocrisy in *Ms.*, this dialogue illustrates *Ms.*' success as they represented a multiplicity of ideas of womanhood.

In this chapter, I argue that *Ms.*' appeal was based on their challenge to traditional definitions and modes of womanhood, on their ability to help women transform themselves from passive victims to activists. The process of feminist transformation can be isolated into three snapshots: 1. *Ms.* exposed traditional rules and roles of femininity and the ways that those roles were used to control women; 2. *Ms.* helped readers to experience moments of consciousness-raising; 3. *Ms.* promoted changes in women's lives by guiding readers to make psychological and practical social changes in their individual lives and by providing many resources for personal and political change. After describing these three snapshots in broad terms, I conduct

a detailed application of these three concepts in context of *The Housewife's Moment of Truth* and women in the home.

By depicting a many faceted notion of womanhood and exploding traditional notions of femininity, *Ms.* was able explicitly and implicitly to argue that women were fundamentally human beings who had the right to pursue fulfillment of a variety of goals and desires not merely those goals and desires sanctioned by traditional social norms. Ultimately, by providing the rhetoric necessary to pursue personal transformation, *Ms.* guided its readers to a new epistemological understanding of womanhood which embraced a variety of methodological approaches to living life.

Snapshot One: The Problem

To begin, *Ms.* sought to identify the problems associated with traditional women. While there were many areas that the writers and editors found problematic, two broad, overarching themes emerged from the magazine as a whole. First traditional roles and norms disempowered women's minds. Second, traditional roles and norms enforced control over all aspects of women's bodies.

Controlling Women's Bodies, Controlling Women's Minds

Traditional approaches to women sought both to control women's minds and to control their bodies. In fact these two areas of control were mutually reinforcing because many women who believed that their natural role was to be subservient to men would accept whatever destiny fate decreed for them. Two primary ways in which control of women's minds was reinforced were: 1. Traditional gender norms taught women and girls to accept their subordinate roles without questioning them; 2.

Women who were unhappy in or who did not fit stereotypical notions of femininity were labeled as crazy by therapists among other people and sometimes committed to mental institutions. Each of these methods of social control ensured that the “glass cage of femininity” remained unbroken (Chesler, 1972, p. 110).

The feminization of women's minds.

Initially, Ms. made the point that very young children learned and internalized stereotyped versions of traditional gender roles. One article described a daycare that did an experiment incorporating a variety of feminist designed toys and educational materials into the children's play in place of traditional toys and educational materials. The new materials showed both men and women in every possible role. The teachers were amazed when the children expressed attitudes showing that they had already internalized traditional assumptions about gender. For example, when she saw a picture of a woman driving a bus, one girl said, “Ladies can't drive” (Smith S. , 1974, p. 90). In another case, the daughter of a teacher was asked about her mother's job. She replied, “She does the dishes.” On further questioning, the girl added, “Well, she cleans, too” (Smith S. , 1974, p. 90).

In another example a boy was putting together a puzzle that pictured a young father feeding his child. When asked about the picture, the boy replied that it was, “A mother holding her baby” (p. 90). When asked a second time, he identified the picture as the grandfather. “Further discussion revealed he was sure it was not the father” (p. 90). In another example, children playing with a toy hospital placed all the women, regardless of their professional uniform, in the hospital beds while they

placed all the men in the active roles (p. 90). Smith argued that young children's stereotypical attitudes reflected societal attitudes as learned through socialization. She wrote "It is surprising how stereotyped the attitudes of many of our five-year-olds seem to be They are saying to themselves, these are the things boys can and can't do, these are the things girls can and can't do" (Smith S. , 1974, p. 90).

Internalizing stereotypes led girls to change their behavior and limit their performance in school. *Ms.* cited a *Time* magazine study that found that "of 900,000 children . . . [by age 9] . . . girls and boys are about equal in school subjects, but that by age 17, boys have far exceeded girls in all but creative writing and music" (Tobias, 1976, p. 58). To sexist society, this stagnation in performance may have been seen as further proof that women were indeed inferior. To feminists, it was proof that girls in American society internalized traditional ideas of feminine weakness.

One example of this process of internalization which controlled women's intellectual development was math anxiety. Despite the fact that there was no scientific link between "sex gene and 'dyscalculia,' an actual brain dysfunction in performing calculations," girls were part of "a culture that . . . [made] . . . math ability a masculine attribute, that . . . [punished] . . . women for doing well in math, and that . . . [soothed] . . . the slower math learner by telling her she . . . [did] . . . not have a 'mathematical mind' (Tobias, 1976, pp. 57, 59). Because there was a "widespread social belief that mathematical aptitude is inborn" (Tobias, 1976, p. 58), and analytic reasoning and logic were traditionally thought to be male characteristics, women began to internalize the belief that they could not perform well in these areas. Tobias

cited a study exposing these gendered attitudes. She wrote, “When asked why they do poorly on a high school math exam, high school girls tend to attribute their failure to lack of ability, while high school boys (of the same capability) usually say they did not work hard enough” (Tobias, 1976, p. 59). Unfortunately, this control of women’s minds and beliefs about what they were or were not capable of accomplishing directly dictated which career fields they could enter. According to Lucy Sells, a feminist sociologist, 57 percent of the male freshmen at Berkeley had “4 years of high school math, but only 8 percent of the entering females had the same preparation” (Tobias, 1976, p. 56). Because they avoided math classes in high school due to their belief that they could not succeed, women’s career choices were severely limited. As Tobias explained, “All but five of the 20 majors at Berkeley in the early 1970s required either calculus or statistics” (1976, p. 56). Later, in the workforce, women could “be barred from any endeavor . . . by the threat that the new job . . . [would] . . . involve some work with ‘data or tables or functions’” (Tobias, 1976, p. 57). Women had internalized the belief that they were naturally inferior in analytic thought which limited their ability prepare for and succeed in a large number of careers. Indeed, this internalization of sexist ideas allowed traditional gender roles to function with girls and women serving as the enforcers of such gender biased limitations.

Women were so well psychologically conditioned, according to *Ms.*, that they would undermine their own intellectual development even in a university setting. For example, in one article, Gornick identified women’s fear of success, arguing that women were conditioned to curtail their own academic success in situations where

they felt “loss of femininity, social rejection, personal . . . destruction or some combination of the above” (1972, p. 51). In these cases, women believed they would never be able to marry if they were “too smart, too independent, and above all, too serious about . . . [their] . . . work . . . [and therefore were] . . . unfeminine” (p. 51). Thus, Gornick argued, there was a “deep split in the souls of . . . women, and the result . . . [was] . . . insupportable anxiety” (p. 52). While women were capable of more, they restrained their own personal development to conform to traditional social roles, in particular using the University setting primarily as a place to find a husband rather than as a place of intellectual development. Inevitably, this conformity led some women to feel a sense of malaise and discontent whether or not they identified its source.

This anxiety led to various problems including depression and mental illness experienced as women tried to reconcile their human potential with the limited roles available to them as females in American society. In fact, *Ms.* argued that there was “a double standard of mental health—one for men, another for women” (Chesler, 1972, p. 110). Women who were experiencing role conflict were labeled as crazy by traditional standards. If a woman was unaware of the underlying source of these problems, she might seek help in a psychological establishment where she would be encouraged to “accept the behavioral norms for her sex—passivity, acquiescence, self sacrifice, and lack of ambition” (Chesler, 1972, p. 110). Traditional psychological measures judged women who were experiencing gender role conflict as “sick” or “abnormal,” as suffering from “psychosexual confusion” while failing to recognize

that this conflict actually arose from “sex role stereotypes” (Krakauer, 1972, p. 33). Thus, when a woman sought help from a therapist, she was told to “give up her ‘masculine’ characteristics, to stop ‘fighting’ her ‘femininity’” (Krakauer, 1972, p. 33). A “successful” result of seeking therapy was that the woman would suppress her “feelings and experiences” (Krakauer, 1972, p. 33). Through this process, she would understand that her feelings were “abnormal,” feel “shame,” and question herself “rather than the standards of mental health” (Krakauer, 1972, p. 33). In other cases, women who exhibited non feminine behavior were committed to mental asylums.

While there is no doubt that some women had psychological problems whatever the cause, traditional society used psychiatric commitment to control both the minds and the bodies of women experiencing depression and other problems resulting from role crises. Traditional society both labeled as deviant and controlled lesbians, women who cursed, women who were promiscuous, women who refused to clean the house or were physically aggressive (all traditionally masculine traits). One author interviewed 24 women in an asylum and 12 of them “exhibited opposite sex traits such as anger, cursing, aggressiveness, sexual love of women, increased sexuality in general and a refusal to perform domestic and emotional compassionate services” (Chesler, 1972, p. 112). The rest of the women “reported a predominance of female-like traits such as depression, suicide attempts, fearfulness and helplessness” (Chesler, 1972, p. 113). Chesler’s article is one example among many of the way that *Ms.* exposed traditional methods of psychological control of women. She wrote, “*Are they sick? Or are they just ‘sick and tired’ of being powerless,*

feeling helplessly trapped” in feminine roles and behavioral norms (p. 113). Thus, defining women as crazy for being unhappy or for violating gender roles was one example of the ways that traditional society controlled women and enforced acceptable notions of femininity.

The feminization of women’s bodies.

In addition to controlling women’s minds, traditional roles controlled women’s bodies. *Ms.* described numerous examples of the ways traditional political, medical and family systems controlled women’s bodies. In this section, I highlight seven: 1. Women were not allowed to choose whether to become a mother or to control the pace of childbirth; 2. Prior to the *Roe v. Wade*, women were denied the legal right to abortion. After *Roe*, anti-abortion activists sought to remove women’s choice to seek abortion regardless of the impact that forced continuation of pregnancy had on individual women; 3. Doctors and other medical personnel often controlled the process of giving birth, leaving the mother with little or no control; 4. Women’s physical movement was limited because all women were subject to the threat of rape for being in the wrong place at the wrong time; 5. Husbands had both explicit and implicit power to control their wives through physical punishment and marital rape; 6. Social and legal norms attempted to control women’s bodies by attempting to enforce heterosexuality which exemplified as lesbian women were often forced to choose between having physical custody of their children and being in a committed love relationship with another woman; 7. In the context of the business world, women were often prohibited from positions that required travel due to the problems

created by traditional gender role prescriptions. Each of the illustrations above reveals bodily control over women in some sense as exemplified through attempts to limit their mobility, attempts to control their sexuality and fertility and through physically violent attacks on their bodies.

First, in traditional gender constructs, women were not allowed to decide whether and when they would become mothers. Pogrebin recognized that the ability to choose either to have or not to have children was “a new one for . . . [their] . . . generation” (1973, p. 48). In the past, motherhood had been compulsory. As Pogrebin explained, “In the minds of so many women, motherhood is prescribed, nonmotherhood is deviate” (p. 48). Traditional notions cast women who were not mothers as “to be pitied” (p. 48). Because being a mother was considered the single qualification for “womanhood,” women could only earn “self respect, maturity and even martyrdom” through becoming a mother (p. 48). Gender role expectations, combined with the previous lack of availability of contraceptives, meant that in traditional constructs, women who did not bear children in marriage were either defective or “heretical” (p. 48).

Second, *Ms.* linked the limitations in the right to seek and obtain abortions to gendered social control of women’s bodies. Gratz argued, “For the patriarchal structure to give up control of women’s bodies as the means of production, means the loss of an emotional and actual sense of superiority” (1973, p. 45). *Ms.* illustrated the result of a lack of safe and legal abortions by printing a graphic picture of a woman left to die in a hotel room after a botched abortion. Gratz wrote, “This individual

woman has come to represent the thousands of women who have been maimed or murdered by a society that denied them safe and legal abortions” (p. 45). She continued, “Anti abortion officials stood up before male dominated legislatures and displayed bottled fetuses and wept for life but . . . they ignored the fact that the decision to have an abortion is never made lightly” (p. 45). To illustrate, Gratz cited numerous heart rending examples where women were denied abortions and suffered or died as a result. One horrible example involved a patient who had numerous medical issues including chronic heart disease and infection in her heart valves. She already had four children and sought an early stage, therapeutic abortion. When the case was presented before a group of Catholic doctors, the abortion was denied. The woman later died in her sixth or seventh month of pregnancy from heart failure. Gratz argued, that “this woman was actually murdered because of other people’s religious convictions” (p. 46). Thus, attempts to limit abortion rights were another expression of gendered control over women’s bodies.

Third, when women did give birth, the medical establishment robbed them of control over the natural process of childbirth. While writers in *Ms.* did not deny that in some cases medical intervention saved women’s lives, they did identify the medical establishment’s assertion of control over the process of giving birth. Indicting practices such as unnecessary use of drugs, unnecessary induction of labor, unnecessary episiotomies, preventing husbands from being present during birth, and strapping women’s arms and legs down among other objectionable practices (Arms, 1975; Haggerty, 1973), articles in *Ms.* argued that unnecessary medical interventions

were often used to allow doctors to control the situation. As Arms explained, doctors intervened “just in case” although in “90 percent of all births, those interferences are unnecessary, costly, and in many cases damaging to either, mother or child or both” (1975, p. 108). Haggerty related her own story about giving birth to her second child in which the hospital personnel “did everything possible to undermine . . . [her] . . . control and then inferred that because women can’t control themselves in labor, they have to be strapped down” (1973, p. 17). These examples are among numerous articles interrogating the accepted practices of hospitals and doctors in relation to giving birth. Ultimately, *Ms.* conveyed the message that doctors and hospitals sought to regulate and control the natural birthing process thus limiting women’s control over their own bodies.

Fourth, the threat of rape enforced societal control over women’s whereabouts. *Ms.* identified the link between rape and controlling women both psychologically and physically. Since all women were potential rape victims, the threat of rape alone was able to control women as a class. Medea and Thompson identified the universal “curfew on women in this country . . . enforced by rapists” (1974, p. 113). They argued that wherever a woman went alone, she knew that she faced “the possibility of rape” (p. 113). Because women were always seen as potential rape victims, they could not move freely in society especially at night. Women who chose to violate this curfew were blamed for their own rapes because they did not accede to the rules governing their whereabouts. In this case, social

norms not only controlled women's freedom of movement, but they also blamed women for being raped.

Fifth, traditional gender and social rules left women in relationships subject to various degrees of violence and to rape even in marriage. Both were extreme examples of male control over female bodies. *Ms.* was the first national publication to break the silence surrounding battered women by depicting a battered woman on the cover (see Figure 2).² "Wife beating had been "generally ignored in our society" despite the fact that it was "among the most common place of crimes" (Gingold, 1976, p. 51). Women in all socioeconomic situations could be beaten by their husbands with little or no legal protection. *Ms.* printed many graphic stories of this type of violence to illustrate its severity. Articles argued that legal structures and the police condoned this type of violence. Gingold wrote, that assault laws existed throughout the United States, "but if that assailant is married to his victim the law is unlikely to be enforced" (1976, p. 54). Police failure to take family violence seriously was discussed in detail as *Ms.* indicted police training, police officers' attitudes, and police officers' failure to arrest offenders or respect victims.

Additionally, no marital rape laws existed in the United States in 1976 when *Ms.* addressed the issue. Gingold wrote, "In every state husbands are immune from prosecution for the rape of a wife" (1976, p. 94). Police and legal system responses to this type of violence grew from the cultural attitude that a man had the right to

² From "Battered Wives: Help for the Secret victim Next Door," by P.Field and J. Cranzano, 1976, *Ms.*, V, Cover. Copyright by Liberty Media for Women, LLC, which is wholly owned by the Feminist Majority Foundation. Reprinted with permission.

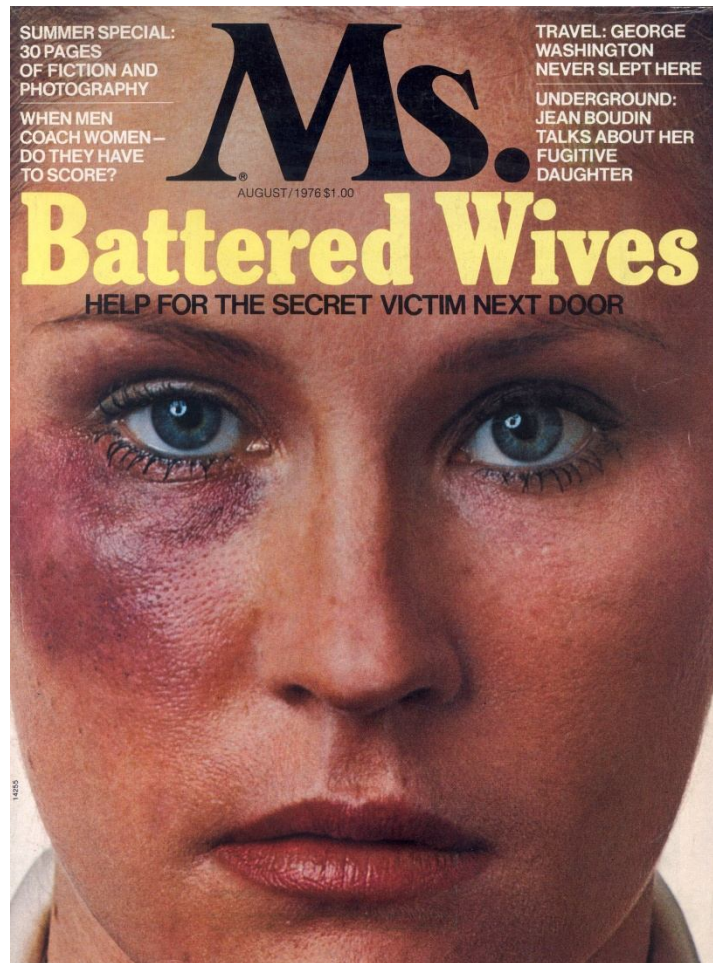


Figure 2. *Ms.* was the first national magazine to depict domestic violence on its cover.

control his wife's body. Indeed, researchers found that traditional attitudes supported a man's right to discipline his woman, to control her body and sexuality in a violent way. Pogrebin cited one Michigan State study that that measured stranger's responses to witnessing violent attacks on the street. The study found that men would "rush to the aid" of men being attacked by men, men being attacked by women and women being attacked by women (1974, p. 55). "But not one male bystander

interfered when a male actor apparently beat up a woman” (p. 55). Thus, traditional gender role constructs validated the right of individual men to violently control the bodies of “their women” even in public spaces.

Sixth, the courts and ex-husbands attempted to control women’s bodies and to enforce heterosexuality by denying lesbian mothers the right to their children.

Because lesbianism was seen as deviant and abnormal, a woman’s sexual preference rather than her parenting skills became the basis for child custody decisions.

Heterosexist judges often believed that being raised by a lesbian mother would make the child homosexual despite numerous psychologists and sociologists testifying that children brought up in lesbian households were not more likely to become homosexuals (Martin & Lyon, 1973, p. 80). In these cases, “the courts, while ‘ruling in the best interests of the children,’ routinely . . . [interpreted] . . . that to be a heterosexual environment . . . not based on the qualifications of the mother , but . . . on the assumption that her children . . . [would] . . . more than likely become homosexuals” (Martin & Lyon, 1973, p. 79). Thus “almost any father who . . . [had] . . . the desire and the means . . . [could] . . . take his child . . . away from a lesbian mother” (Johnston, September, p. 91). These constraints limited the mother’s ability to live a life that was personally fulfilling as both a mother and sexual being. One article cited an example of Sandra and Madeline who were raising their children together in the same house and functioning as a family. They had a “viable and loving family” until their husbands sought custody of the children. Despite their ability to provide a loving and healthy family environment, the court “rejected

testimony of a psychiatrist and social worker that the children . . . [appeared to be] . . . adjusted and healthy-the two women . . . [were] . . . forced to separate” or to lose their children. (Martin & Lyon, 1973, p. 78). Thus, judges who were steeped in traditional gender role expectations, used child custody decisions to control women’s choices regarding where and who they could live with, especially when their choices did not fit into strict heterosexual guidelines.

Seventh, limitations on women’s ability to travel in a business environment justified gendered employment discrimination. Women were traditionally not allowed to travel for business. If they did, they faced discriminatory attitudes. While many companies did not have written policies prohibiting women from traveling, women were mostly excluded because of multiple limiting stereotypes. Wedemeyer explained the justifications when she wrote,

If a woman travels alone, she might not be safe. If she travels with a single man, it might not look proper. If she travels with a married man, his wife might be jealous. If a customer makes a pass at her and she declines, the customer might be embarrassed and never deal with the company again. If she accepts, she might be embarrassed and never call the customer again. And, worries one major corporation President, who will take care of the travelling woman’s husband while she’s gone? (Wedemeyer, 1974, p. 42)

Wedemeyer also detailed safety concerns for women alone in hotels and recounted sexist responses to women who did travel which had been expressed by hotel clerks,

hotel laundry facilities, airline employees and their business associates, among others. Each of these assumptions and responses limited women's ability to travel and therefore limited their earning potential and reified their second class status in the business world.

Examples of discrimination against women's bodies and minds.

In addition to the above means of societal control over women's minds and women's bodies, physical and psychological control of women manifested themselves various forms of discrimination. While the scope of this chapter does not allow for extensive discussion of these areas, it is important to note that *Ms.* identified and addressed many areas of discrimination including: discrimination in education; exploitation of women's labor in the home; lack of access to acceptable and affordable childcare; harassment and discrimination in the workplace; unequal opportunities to participate in sports; discrimination in political arenas; and, stereotypical notions that women could not stand up for their rights as a consumer, fix a car, handle construction equipment and materials, start a business, manage their investments, manage their health, or handle their credit, among other topics. *Ms.* devoted many articles to identifying and describing the political, legal and social dimensions of each of these issues, which *Ms.* identified as consequences of the suppositions that men and society had the right to control both women's bodies and women's minds because they considered women inferior. To illustrate the way that physical and psychological control manifest themselves in gender discrimination, I highlight three examples including: 1. Discrimination against women in law school

and in the law; 2. Discrimination against female astronauts; and, 3. Discrimination against women by credit granting institutions.

Initially, *Ms.* highlighted several examples of discrimination in education. One specific example cited was discrimination in law school and the field of law. For example, one article detailed Ruth Bader Ginsburg's experience being "unable to find a job with a law firm-even though she tied for first in her class" at Columbia Law School (Edminston, 1974, p. 74). The article also discussed the paucity of female lawyers (only 2.7 percent of lawyers were women in 1974) and the discrepancy in pay for female lawyers (female lawyers were making \$8,500 less than men) (Edminston, 1974, p. 74). Additionally, to become lawyers women suffered discrimination in the law school classroom as one student stated, "Professors like to liven up dull material by telling sexist jokes and stories about dumb blondes" (Edminston, 1974, p. 76). Additionally, women were excluded from the most prestigious positions in the law including, "partnerships in powerful firms, professorships in the law schools, and policy making positions in the government" (Edminston, 1974, p. 74). In this example, standard operating procedure in both law school and the law worked to control both women's minds and their bodies. Subjecting female students to continuous sexism in the classroom, paying female lawyers less and excluding them from the most powerful positions in the law, taught women that they were second class citizens. Unwillingness to hire female attorneys and excluding them from the most prestigious jobs controlled their place in the hierarchy of the law.

Second, in addition to discrimination in the field of law, *Ms.* discussed discrimination in many other areas of employment. One prominent example involved female astronauts. In 1969 when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon, there were thirteen women who had been trained, passed all the tests and demonstrated exceptional suitability to go to space. But, none were chosen because positions on space crews were for men only (McCullough, 1973). When it was revealed to the press that these women existed, these highly trained professionals were referred to as “Astrodolls, Spacegals, Astrotrix, and Astronottes” (McCullough, 1973, p. 41). In the public debate that followed, one NASA official said, “Talk of an American spacewoman makes me sick to my stomach” (McCullough, 1973, p. 45). NASA also stated to Congress, “that the program would be greatly impeded if they were forced to include women” (McCullough, 1973, p. 45). NASA’s treatment of their female astronauts illustrates control of both women’s bodies and minds. Women’s bodies were controlled as they were excluded from masculine space, specifically being denied the opportunity to travel to outer space because they were women. In addition, the diminutive terms used by the press and NASA’s official statements sent a clearly derogatory message that women not only lacked the respect afforded to male astronauts but women were considered counterproductive and would actually harm the space program.

A third area in which women faced discrimination was the credit market. *Ms.* included many examples of women who were denied credit cards or other lines of credit based on their gender. Single women were either asked to have their fathers

co-sign or were “frequently denied credit outright simply because a woman . . . [was] . . . not thought of as financially responsible enough to need or deserve it” (Smith M., 1972, p. 36). Other examples of discrimination included: a working attorney who was told by a department store that credit would only be extended based on her husband’s credit rather than hers despite the fact that he was a medical student and earning zero income; a woman who was denied access to selling her own stocks, purchased prior to her marriage, without her husband’s consent; a woman who applied for a Veteran’s Administration mortgage was asked to sign an affidavit of intent not to have children (Smith M., 1972, p. 36). These are a few of the many examples of credit discrimination that women faced. Indeed, the Federal Housing Administration justified discrimination against women by “rationalizing that many working wives quit after having their first child” while other lenders argued, “that a single woman might marry and stop working” (Smith M., 1972, pp. 36-37). In the case of credit discrimination, lenders sent stereotypical messages about women’s minds by suggesting to women and others that women were irresponsible, unreliable, unable to handle their finances without the intervention of a man and destined to become non wage earning mothers who would not exist financially apart from their husbands. Refusing to give women an individual financial identity and denying them access to their own stocks and other funds controlled their ability to access money. This was a form of bodily control because it made women dependent on their husbands for all but the most simplistic financial interactions. Such high levels of

financial dependency surely would have made it difficult for women in unhappy marriages to leave.

Out of the previous examples, it is possible to infer a description of a traditional woman presented to the *Ms.* reader. A traditional woman was defined as intellectually, psychologically and physically weak. A few of the characteristics sexist society ascribed to women were: they should be controlled by their husbands; they did not excel in school or work environments; they were unable to develop intellectually especially in areas of math or science; they were irresponsible with money; they could not be trusted with another woman's husband; in the end every woman, no matter how professional would have babies and quit working. As depicted in *Ms.*, traditional gender roles were based in women's inherent weakness and their need to be protected and thus controlled. Themes of physical and mental weakness played out in every context of discrimination as the examples in the previous sections illustrate. Traditional gender roles altered women's epistemologies and their methodological approaches to life. Epistemologically, traditional attitudes taught women to understand themselves as lesser beings who did not deserve the same rights as men. After all, if they really were weaker, more passive, and less intellectually capable than men, their subordinate position was justified. Methodologically, traditional gender role constructions led many women to lead passive lives, accepting their lot, rather than actively seeking change.

Snapshot Two: Examining the Source of Gender Differences and Social Role Construction

Ms. argued that the truth was far from the gender stereotypes which were so ingrained in social and political thought. Traditional gender role constructions were based in concepts of what was natural. Traditionalists believed that because women were naturally weaker both in mind and body that discriminatory arrangements were not only acceptable, but desirable. *Ms.* contradicted these assumptions in many ways and sought to refute the biological assumptions behind these claims. First, the magazine challenged the concept that women were naturally mentally and physically inferior. Second, it exposed linguistic constructions that enforced and normalized and created gender discrimination. By addressing these two causal aspects of gendered difference, writers in *Ms.* were able to lay the ground work for new concepts of womanhood.

Denaturalizing Gender Differences

To challenge justifications for discrimination against women in all aspects of life, *Ms.* sought to undermine claims of male superiority based on both psychological and physical differences between men and women. Refutation of arguments that gendered hierarchies were based on natural differences was necessary to undercut justification for discrimination in all areas. If women were not psychologically or physically inferior, arguments that anatomy was their destiny became nonsensical. It was particularly important to challenge arguments for male superiority based on biology because they limited women's ability to attain their full potential as human beings. The false assumption of male biological superiority was that it encouraged

women to blame themselves rather than social inequity for any unhappiness or maladjustment they experienced, to look inward rather than outward for solutions. It also taught women that they were not emotionally or physically strong enough to stand up for themselves. If they did show signs of strength, they were unnatural and unfeminine. Thus, until women began to question the fundamental biological basis of male superiority, empowerment was impossible because their unhappiness often was turned inward, as they and others (their husbands, therapists, and society) criticized and blamed them in any situation for supposed inadequacy. If *Ms.* and other feminists could demonstrate that “women’s chains have been forged by men, not anatomy” (Ramey, 1972, p. 14), they could open the path for radical social transformation. If women believed they deserved to be treated as fully human, they could stop passively accepting their status and begin to demand equality and human respect in all areas.

Initially, *Ms.* challenged claims that women were psychologically inferior by delinking traits from nature. Krakauer argued that linking traits like “competence, strength, and assertiveness” to males and traits such as “passivity, submissiveness, and dependency” to females left “little chance that a person . . . [would] . . . feel competent and feminine at the same time” (1972, p. 33). In other words, linking specific psychological character traits to gender was a rigged game in which women would always lose.

Several articles indicted the sexist nature of the psychological establishment. One example was written by Ozick, who argued that “almost everything separating women from men is a social fabrication—clothing, occupations, thinking habits,

temperament When we say ‘woman’ we are invoking a heritage of thought, a myth, a learned construct: an idea.” (Ozick, 1972, p. 54). She placed much of the blame for flaws in psychological approaches to women with Freud’s concept that “anatomy is destiny” which, according to Ozick, meant that not only were women naturally tied to sex roles, but they were inherently and inevitably psychologically feeble. Rather than linking women’s entire lives to a woman’s reproductive capacity, people should recognize that a woman’s body was “subject to . . . ordinary interruptions, by which she . . . [was] . . . distinguished very little from anybody else” (Ozick, 1972, p. 54). Indeed, giving birth twice only takes about 12 hours of a woman’s 700,800 hour life. Thus, to Ozick, it seemed unjust that, “for the sake of this 12 hours . . . this person is thrust into an ethos which enjoins rigid duties on her, almost none of them rationally related to . . . childbirth” (Ozick, 1972, p. 54).

Tying women to their anatomical structure severely limited their possibilities to embrace life. Indeed, “To reduce the person altogether to her anatomy is to wish the person into nullity” (Ozick, 1972, p. 56). In other words, if biological design dictated who and what a living person was, that person would be severely limited and unable to pursue any type of personal growth or fulfillment. Because humans had an inner life and the possibility to think and develop, Ozick found these stereotyped claims nonsensical. Anatomy was merely “a form of technology-nature’s engineering” (Ozick, 1972, p. 56). In other words our bodies were the machines run by our individual minds. She wrote, “If anatomy were destiny, the wheel could not have been invented; we would have been limited by legs.” (Ozick, 1972, p. 56).

Thus, delinking the individual mind from prescribed limitations was necessary to free women's minds to develop in any way they saw fit; to free women's minds to explore the world and make new discoveries about themselves. In other words delinking biological destiny from women's thoughts allowed them to make new ontological discoveries about their lives and status as human beings.

In addition to arguments about women's psychology, *Ms.* published multiple arguments challenging assumptions about biologically dictated physical difference. As noted earlier, the preview issue of *Ms.* included an article suggesting that men had hormonal cycles similar to women. Additionally, *Ms.* featured an article suggesting that older fathers posed genetic risks to their offspring in the same way that mothers did. The implication of this article was that men were not genetically superior to women.

The third aspect of this argument was minimizing difference in physical strength. One argument *Ms.* published was that even if there were some natural differences between men and women, one sex should not be judged inferior because women were naturally superior in some ways as well. Scott wrote that women who were pregnant with male fetuses were 25 percent more likely to miscarry than women carrying female fetuses (Scott, 1974, p. 89). She developed this argument, "There are 106 male infants born for every 100 females, but by age 20 the men are outnumbered and their life expectancy is 66.6 years compared with 74 years for women" (Scott, 1974, p. 89). This argument was not meant to place women as biologically superior; rather it served to undermine the notion that men were biologically superior. Each

sex had its physical strengths and weaknesses. Including this approach also meant that *Ms.* could concede that there might be some minor biological differences, but that those differences should not serve as evidence for cultural superiority.

In addition, several articles suggested that cultural factors had limited women's physical development so drastically that it wasn't possible to know their potential for physical development. One article quoted, Dr. Horner, a professor of psychology at Harvard, who said, "We have to . . . get to the bottom of what is genuinely natural in women. What we now call natural is only normative . . . what our culture has defined as normal for women and . . . for men, but it sheds no light on what is natural" (Gornick, 1972, p. 53). Scott argued that, "the truth of female power still . . . [lay] . . . buried under centuries of sexist dogma" (1974, p. 50). She quoted Dr. Frank Katch, who said that women have "never been pushed hard enough or given strenuous training. I predict there'll be a revolution in the next five years in what women can do" (p. 89). Primarily, physical differences were based on athletic training or lack of training. "By developing her powers to the fullest, any woman . . . [could] . . . be a match for any man" (Scott, 1974, p. 89). The point was that, for women who had full physical training over the course of their lives, "the gap between the sexes in most physical tests could well be narrowed to 10 percent or less" (Scott, 1974, p. 50). Thus, rather than categorizing women as physically inferior, "the physically inferior . . . are . . . any human beings who do not develop the body's potential" (Scott, 1974, p. 49). Additionally, she argued a woman who developed herself physically would be empowered through the process. She wrote, that a

physically empowered woman would “inherit the essential source of human self-confidence-pride in and control over a finely tuned body. That alone would be a revolution” (Scott, 1974, p. 89)

All of these arguments boiled down to the idea that, women were primarily “human beings,” and that any physical differences were related to human “reproduction” (Steinem, 1972, p. 48). Otherwise, women shared, “the dreams, capabilities, weaknesses of all human beings” (Steinem, 1972, p. 48).

Fundamentally, *Ms.* conveyed the message, argued by Steinem among others, that commentaries about “occasional pregnancies and other visible differences have been used . . . to mark us for an elaborate division of labor that . . . has . . . become cruel and false” (Steinem, 1972, p. 48). Ultimately, the hope was that defeating the conceptual link between a woman’s biology and her destiny would be revolutionary. Dr. Horner was quoted saying, “Perhaps . . . liberation from sexual stereotypes can eventually feed into a new normative world in which women may finally be able to define themselves” (Gornick, 1972, p. 53). Fundamentally, undermining the causal link between gender and biological superiority would change the ontological assumptions upon which women were basing their epistemological understandings of their lives.

Language and the Concept of the Self

Language was another causal factor that contributed to the way that both women and men understood gender. Language both reflects epistemological understandings and creates epistemological understandings. Indeed, Gary argued,

that “words reflect the thoughts and behavior of the . . . creatures who make them” (1972, p. 72). *Ms.* understood that it was important to interrogate language because, “The derivation and usage of words about women tell a good deal about the changing status of the sex” (p. 72). In addition to reflecting cultural attitudes, language is one of the most basic units of socialization. *Ms.* published several arguments that supported the importance of our language choices in influencing the way that social norms were enforced and influenced women. These arguments included: 1. The way that women talked and were socialized reinforced a sense of female weakness; 2. Women were punished when they spoke in a non feminine manner; 3. The words used to describe women were harmful to women as a group; 4. The term woman and other terms linked to women were used to enforce their social roles and reinforce negative characteristics associated with the feminine; 5. The use of generic male terms excluded women; and 6. Men and women were often linguistically defined in opposition to each other. *Ms.* concluded that it was important to challenge these linguistic constructions and for individuals to choose words carefully when discussing gender.

Initially, *Ms.* argued that the way that women speak was socializing them to appear weak. As a subordinate group, they learned to talk in a way that undercut their credibility. Women were expected to speak “women’s language” which was the “pleasant . . . , euphemistic, never-aggressive way of talking we learned as little girls” (Lakoff, 1974, p. 65). Thus, the way that women were taught to speak actually reflected and reinforced the bias against them. Lakoff wrote, “Cultural bias was built

into the language we were allowed to speak, the subjects we were allowed to speak about, and the ways we were spoken of” (Lakoff, 1974, p. 65). This socialization made women into “communicative cripples” (Lakoff, 1974, p. 65) because they were limited by gendered role constructions.

Often women were afraid to speak their opinions. One article quoted Dr. Cheryl Richey of University of Washington. Richey stated, “A lot of women censor themselves because they’re afraid of negative reactions” (Withers, 1975, p. 106). In this article, the author detailed women’s attendance at a verbal assertiveness seminar. One class participant, Debbie, said,

I used to come on silly and giggly because I got what I wanted that way. But, now I just refuse to act like a “dumb broad.” I behave as though I know what I’m talking about and people treat me with more respect. (Withers, 1975, p. 109)

Teaching women to be linguistically passive and to portray a lack of intelligence played into traditional gender structures.

The second argument *Ms.* featured was that women who did violate gendered communicative expectations, were punished socially. This placed women in a double bind because those who met gendered expectations were viewed as naturally inferior; while those who did not were mannish. Lakoff argued that women who violated gendered speech expectations, who did not “talk like a lady” or acted “unfeminine,” were “ridiculed” (Lakoff, 1974, p. 65). On the other hand, women who did meet gender roles expectations were powerless. Lakoff explained,

If we do learn all the fuzzy-headed, unassertive language of our sex, we are ridiculed for being unable to think clearly, unable to take part in a serious discussion, and therefore unable to hold a position of power.

It doesn't take much of this for a woman to begin feeling she deserves such treatment because of inadequacies in her own intelligence and education. (Lakoff, 1974, p. 65)

Thus, women's modes of communication sentenced them to belonging to an inferior class.

Third, negative terms were often used to describe women as a group. For example, "The term 'feminine logic' illustrates the most negatively sexist use of the modifier tactic since it implies non-logic or lack of logic" (Graham, 1973, p. 14). By using the term feminine to modify logic, the implication was that feminine logic was not logic at all. Even words used to describe both men and women often had a negative connotation when they were used to describe women. For example, Lakoff argued that the terms spinster and bachelor mean functionally the same thing, a single person. However, a spinster had many negative connotations including the idea that no man wanted the woman in question. For a bachelor, the connotation suggested that he had escaped, that he had successfully avoid being trapped into the bonds of matrimony. Lakoff wrote, "Often a word may be used for both men and women . . . but when it is applied to woman, it assumes a special meaning that by implication rather than outright assertion, is derogatory to women as a group" (Lakoff, 1974, p.

66). Again women were in a double bind, no matter what life path they chose to pursue, they were linked to the most negative of feminine traits.

Fourth, the use of the term woman and other associated terms enforced social roles and reinforced negative characteristics linked to women. First the word woman was linked to the traditional roles of wife and mother. For example, “In common usage, the word ‘woman’ has acquired the significance of ‘wife’ (as in ‘I’ve got to get home to my woman’)” (Gary, 1972, p. 73). In fact, the origin of the word woman was identified as “wife” (Gary, 1972, p. 73). In this way, Gary argued that “women’s linguistic identity seems to be inextricable from the home and men” (Gary, 1972, p. 73). It was also linked to negative female stereotypes such as psychological instability as in the word hysteria, defined as,

Unhealthy or erratic behavior thought . . . to be . . . womanish. So thoroughly was emotional instability judged female that the most deep-seated female organ was made to take the blame. Hysteria in Greek means ‘uterus.’” (Gary, 1972, p. 99)

Thus, the origin of many terms limited the roles available to women and reinforced negative stereotypes about them.

Fifth, the use of the generic masculine cast women as invisible despite the fact that women made up slightly over half of the population. In one example, *Ms.* discussed the excessive use of generic masculine examples in grade school textbooks. Graham wrote, “In the real world, there are 100 women for every 95 men. Yet in the books read by schoolchildren, there are over seven times as many men as women and

over twice as many boys as girls” (Graham, 1973, p. 12). In the same vein, *Ms.*, published articles indicting the use of the generic term he arguing that it excluded women. Using a masculine referent when referring to both sexes damaged young girls psychologically because it taught them that women were invisible. One article quoted, Lynn T. White, the President of Mills College. She said,

The penetration of this habit of language into the minds of little girls . . . is more profound than most people, including most women, have recognized: for it implies that personality is really a male attribute, and that women are a human subspecies It would be a miracle if a girl-baby, learning to use the symbols of our tongue could escape some wound to her self –respect: whereas baby boy’s ego is bolstered by the pattern of our language. (Miller & Swift, 1972, p. 7)

Thus, Miller and Swift suggested an alternate singular generic term, “tey.” While this term was not adopted, other articles in *Ms.* outlined some of the conventions that have changed since the 1970s such as substituting the use he or she for an exclusively masculine pronoun such as he used independently.

Sixth, language was often used to define men and women in binary opposition to each other. Graham labeled this linguistic socialization device as “my-virtue-is-your-vice.” She wrote, “Since men and women are supposed to be polar opposites, what is considered admirable in one has to be contemptible in the other” (1973, p. 14). In this linguistic circumstance,

If a woman is commended for the gentle qualities that make her *feminine*, then a man must be condemned for any similar show of softness with the epithet *effeminate*. A man's tears are womanish; a woman's uniform mannish. The lessons learned by both male and female are clear: biology is not only destiny; it is character. (Graham, 1973, p. 14)

Thus, *Ms.* argued that language choices dictated and enforced the development of negative stereotypes and gendered roles.

Revealing the causal role that language played in regulating stereotypical gender roles and undermining women's sense of self was important to lay the groundwork for consciousness raising among women. *Ms.* made arguments that: women were socialized to communicate in a weak (i.e. feminine) way; women's gendered expression was regulated linguistically; women were described derogatorily; words used to describe women enforced social roles and reinforced negative characteristics associated with the feminine; generic male terms excluded women and negatively impacted their psyche and; men and women were defined negatively in opposition to each other. As a result, *Ms.* contended that it was important to change the language in ways that afforded women respect as human beings.

Ms. supported several efforts to change language and the way it was used in regard to women. Graham pointed out that prior to 1972 the words *Ms.*, sexism and liberated woman did not appear in any American dictionary (Graham, 1973, p. 12).

Graham argued that, “we have an obligation now to weigh our words, to examine them, and to use them with greater care. Children of both sexes deserve equal treatment, in life and in language, and we should not offer them anything less” (Graham, 1973, p. 16). Thus, as feminists it was important to question contemporary practices and to attempt to forge new linguistic patterns that opened the way for a fundamental shift in understanding gendered social constructs.

In fact, *Ms.* was acutely aware of their language use from the beginning of their publication. They argued that it was necessary to have a title that described women without indicating marital status which defined a woman in terms of her relationship to a man. The editors wrote, “If *Mr.* is enough to indicate ‘male,’ then *Ms.* should be enough to indicate ‘female’” (*Ms.*, 1972, p. 4). Thus, by choosing the name *Ms.*, the magazine was making a strong political statement about the power of language. The choice to use *Ms.* as the name of the magazine was a symbolic affirmation of women’s humanity. *Ms.* was used “to signify a female human being. It’s symbolic and important. There’s a lot in a name” (*Ms.*, 1972, p. 4). By choosing a word that defined women as female without relation to a man, *Ms.* argued that women were human beings in their own right. The implication was that recognizing women’s humanity in language would cause people to recognize their humanity in the real world.

To enable the epistemological and methodological changes that *Ms.* sought to promote, changing the ontological understanding of gender and its relationship to any particular human being was essential. *Ms.* challenged traditional ontological

understandings that cast gender roles as biological and inevitable by addressing two causal factors in the replication of those roles. *Ms.* undermined the assumption that biology was linked to socially determined gendered characteristics. The magazine also identified the way that language functioned to enforce and replicate gendered assumptions in American's minds. By undermining the validity of these two primary causal factors in anti-feminist thought, *Ms.* laid the groundwork for readers to experience transformations in themselves. Indeed, freed from the dictates of linguistic and biological destiny, readers could experience revolution within, one that fundamentally changed their epistemological understandings of self and their methodological approaches to the world.

Snapshot Three: Solutions

In their first December issue, the editors of *Ms.* addressed holiday wishes to their readers. They wrote,

We wish for all of us the courage to hold onto . . . the vision of all people as perfect and transcendent-free of social prisons of sex and race-and remarkable for the hopes and dreams and capabilities that exist in unique, unrepeatable combination in each of us. (*Ms.*, 1972c, p. 39)

The hope was that readers would act to free themselves of the shackles of sex discrimination. *Ms.* published articles that let the readers know that they were not alone. The magazine provided theories, suggestions for activism and instructions for personal empowerment in every issue and in many articles. To help readers empower

themselves and others, *Ms.* identified a four step process. First, readers had to empower their minds by recognizing their oppression through consciousness-raising. Second, readers needed to empower their bodies. Third, *Ms.* inspired readers by providing feminist heroines. Fourth, *Ms.* created a vision of a diverse, new woman, an activist who sought equality for all human beings. *Ms.* cast readers as the many faces of the new woman encouraging them to become activists. Each of these steps of empowerment exhibited themselves in the discussion of women in the home.

Empowering Women's Minds: Raising Awareness as a Prerequisite to Action

Raising women's consciousness was a necessary prerequisite to women's political action. Before any guidelines for activism, instructions for engaging in political and social protest, and numerous other suggestions for female empowerment could become reality, women needed to understand their oppression. It was important for women to realize the impact of discrimination in their own lives and to understand that many of their problems were related to their membership in a subordinate class of people before they could become an effective force for political change. As Robin Morgan argued, it is because the personal is political that raising women's consciousness provided "insight into the . . . exterior realities and interior imperatives . . . that . . . [made] . . . the women's movement unique, less abstract, and more functionally *possible* than previous movements for social change" (Morgan, 1975, p. 74). While Chapter two highlights the way that *Ms.* itself functioned as a source of mediated consciousness raising and cites numerous examples of letters to the editors recounting moments of consciousness, I use this section to highlight the

conversion to feminism among three prominent feminists published in *Ms.* Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Robin Morgan, and Gloria Steinem each described the individual experiences leading to their feminist consciousness. Their experiences illustrated for readers the nature and necessity of consciousness-raising as a prerequisite for political change. By publishing their confessional accounts of changes in their own consciousness, *Ms.* constructed these women as role models, helping to provide a context for readers who were going through their own moments of discovery.

Initially, when she first heard about the Women's Liberation Movement, Pogrebin thought that she did not need it. She wrote, "I believed only in strong women who went out to change their own lives; women who broke down discrimination barriers by being twice as smart; women who didn't need help" (Pogrebin L. C., 1973a, p. 80). Since she was successful personally, she thought that women who weren't successful didn't work hard enough. Discussing this attitude in retrospect, she judged that her consciousness was, "still in the primordial ooze" particularly her attitude towards consciousness-raising groups which she believed would be "bitching session[s] or a warm bath in self pity" (Pogrebin L. C., 1973a, p. 80). However, her attitude changed based on her own consciousness-raising experience. She wrote, "Since that time I . . . have become a proselytizer for the consciousness raising process" (Pogrebin L. C., 1973a, p. 80). It was only after giving up "the protective device of exempting . . . [herself] . . . from the woman's condition" that she was able understand that she was part of the "us" indicated when people made disparaging claims about women as a group (Pogrebin L. C., 1973a, p.

80). Only by recognizing the inferior status and active oppression of women as a group could she begin to chart her own course for promoting political change either personally or in the feminist movement.

Similarly, Robin Morgan recounted that in 1965 she was a standard woman trying to fit into a variety of female roles. In this process, she experienced personal disquiet as she had difficulty reconciling her human potential with the roles she was expected to fill. However, she did not recognize the true nature of the problem. Instead, she felt a general sense of discontent. She wrote that her, “poems quietly began muttering something about my personal pain as a woman-unconnected, of course, to anyone else, since I saw this merely as inadequacy, my own battle” (Morgan, 1975, p. 74). As she discovered the woman’s movement, she felt an “inescapable, intensifying women’s consciousness” and experienced,

Profound “interior” changes . . . released by this consciousness

The detailed examination of life, experiences, of power, honesty, commitment, bravely explored through so many vulnerable hours with other women-the discovery of shared suffering and shared determination to become whole. (Morgan, 1975, p. 75)

After members of her consciousness-raising group experienced similar changes, they felt a “desperate urgency, arising partly from the barrage of brain boggling ‘clicks’ our consciousness encountered about the condition of females in a patriarchal world” (Morgan, 1975, p. 75). By changing themselves internally, they could shift from the status of passive victimhood associated with traditional femininity to the status of

active women who determined their own destinies and helped to empower others. Morgan wrote, “Women’s consciousness and our desire for freedom and the power to forge a humane world society will survive There are millions of us now, and the vision is expanding its process to include us all” (1975, p. 102). Indeed, Morgan’s experience supported the importance of the need to spread consciousness-raising to others. If enough women could experience profound shifts in their understanding of themselves and society, the women’s movement would be unstoppable.

Steinem described her experience in a way that was personal and also broadly applicable to other women. She wrote that in the wake of her consciousness-raising activities, she was “just beginning to find out who I am” (1972, p. 49). Initially, Steinem did not identify with the feminist movement. But, she eventually gave consciousness raising a try. Despite her initial resistance, she wrote that “the ideas of this great sea-change in women’s view of ourselves are contagious and irresistible” (p. 48). She likened the consciousness-raising experience to a “revelation, as if we had left a small dark room and walked into the sun” (p. 48). The first step was personal discovery. Steinem recalled, “At first my discoveries seemed complex and personal . . . they were the same ones so many millions of women have made and are making” (p. 48). When she realized that her discoveries were descriptive of women as a class, she came to the conclusion that there was an enormous need for feminist activism. She wrote,

Once this feminist realization dawned . . . I was amazed at the . . .
obviousness of a realization that made sense . . . of my life experience .

. . . I realized . . . how far that new vision of life was from the system around us, and how tough it would be to explain the feminist realization at all, much less to get people . . . to accept it. (p. 48)

To create such a change, millions of American women would have to go through similar consciousness-raising experiences.

Steinem argued that these experiences were widely applicable to women regardless of their racial or class status. The strength of feminist awakening was, according to Steinem, that all women could share the “the exhilaration of growth and self-discovery, the sensation of having the scales fall from our eyes” (p. 48). Indeed, the universal experience of second class status linked purely to gender drew connections where before there were divisions. Steinem wrote, “These deep and personal connections of women . . . ignore barriers of age, economics, worldly experience, race, culture—all the barriers that, in male or mixed society, had seemed so difficult to cross” (p. 48). In her experience, consciousness-raising enabled women to forge profound connections with other women. She wrote about the connections between unlikely groups of women including a specific example of a group of female university students and older, more established housewives. Despite obvious differences, they were able to connect as women because as one housewife said, “Men think we’re whatever it is we do for men It’s only by getting together with other women that we’ll ever find out who we are” (Steinem, 1972, p. 49). Through consciousness-raising, women were able to begin to understand the discriminatory nature of traditional gender roles and that they were so much more than what they had

always been taught and expected to be. While it was not discussed in terms of epistemology, feminist consciousness-raising was a process of creating new epistemological understandings based on a politics of experience. Steinem wrote, “I have discovered politics that are not intellectual or superimposed. They are organic” (p. 49). Steinem believed, “It will take a coalition . . . [of out groups] . . . to achieve a society in which, at a minimum, no one is born into a second class role because of visible difference, because of race or sex.” (p. 49). Thus, if other women could go through the same consciousness-raising process and embrace feminist notions of sisterhood, enormous societal transformation could happen. American society could begin to understand all human beings as equal rather than casting some as inferior based on trivial physical characteristics.

By sharing their stories, Pogrebin, Morgan and Steinem sought to encourage women to participate in consciousness-raising processes so that they could gain a new understanding of their status as women in society and perhaps become activists in their lives or in more political realms. To make this possible, they shared their own stories and encouraged other women to share theirs. They also addressed their previously negative views of feminism. This recognition was important to encourage readers who might be doubtful about feminism to give consciousness-raising a chance. In addition to providing confessional accounts of the conversion experiences of key models, *Ms.* published a guide to forming consciousness raising groups (*Ms.*, 1972b). On that topic, Morgan’s article included several pages of specific experiences in her consciousness raising group and many suggestions that could be

incorporated in other groups' processes (Morgan, 1975). Thus, *Ms.* gave readers the information necessary to make the personal political, to explore and seek changes in their own understandings of women's status in American society. This process of epistemological discovery created a foundation for women to change their methodological approaches to their personal, social and political lives.

Epistemologically, women moved from believing culturally imposed stereotypes that women were passive, weak, intellectually inferior, etc. to the discovery that women could, through personal choice, make their own definition of womanhood without constraints. Methodologically, women moved from blaming themselves to being activists in all areas of life. While it was a positive step forward, it was not enough to empower women's minds exclusively. They also needed to empower their bodies.

Empowering Women's Bodies

Because gender discrimination encouraged women to embrace physical weakness and not to develop their bodies, *Ms.* encouraged women to empower their bodies as a source of feminist activism. The primary method for such empowerment was physical development of the body through the practice of sports. Several articles cited earlier in this chapter linked physical weakness to women's status as an oppressed group. One example of this argument was made by McCall who argued that, "Our society has found it more profitable and safer to keep women physically unfit, to maintain the 'fairer and weaker sex' distinction so that they may remain vessels of consumption and ornaments" (Mc Call, 1977, p. 12). To remedy this oppressive situation, *Ms.* used two primary rhetorical tactics to encourage

participation in sports. These were: 1. *Ms.* published pictures and articles featuring a wide variety of women participating in various of sports; and, 2. *Ms.* published practical advice for women who wished to participate in sports. Should a woman choose to seek to develop control over her body through participation in sports, according to *Ms.*, she would experience a strong sense of empowerment. This empowerment produced: political empowerment and activism; personal fulfillment and pride, and bodily strength all of which challenged sex discrimination.

Initially, *Ms.* featured a very wide variety of active depictions of women. During the first five years, *Ms.* mentioned, pictured or profiled the following sports; swimming, baseball, track and field, martial arts, long distance running, cross country skiing, rafting, ice hockey, rodeo, skiing, basketball, gymnastics, cycling, fishing, softball, archery, fencing, squash, platform tennis, table tennis, badminton, curling, sailing, lacrosse and field hockey, volleyball, golf, double-dutch jump roping and skydiving, among others. By featuring such a wide range of sports, they portrayed a diversity of paths to physical empowerment. For example, the September 1974 cover featured female cyclists engaging in a race (see figure 3).³ This cover was among several depicting women in active, sporty roles. Other similar covers featured: Billie Jean King playing tennis (July 1973); a woman cross country skiing (March, 1976); and woman engaging in “the great escape” by backpacking (July 1975). In addition to devoting cover and editorial content to women’s sports participation, *Ms.* published

³ From “The Sporting Life,” by S. Novara, 1974, *Ms.*, III, Cover. Copyright by Liberty Media for Women, LLC, which is wholly owned by the Feminist Majority Foundation. Reprinted with permission.



Figure 3. One of several covers depicting women participating in sports.

many articles and pictures with similar themes. One point of these articles was to make women aware of the sports in which other women were already participating. An article titled *Sports Smorgasbord* was representative of many articles addressing women's status in sports. This article featured women's accomplishments in a variety of sports. Examples included rodeo, skiing, basketball, track, cycling, softball, archery, swimming, fencing, squash, tennis, table tennis, badminton, curling, yachting, volleyball, and fishing (Kane, 1974). The sheer diversity of the sports

covered in this single article points to *Ms.*' dedication to depicting a wide variety of types of sports participation stories and images. By featuring a range of role models in sports, *Ms.* conveyed the message that readers could also empower themselves through sports participation.

Second, to encourage women to engage in sports, *Ms.* often included practical information that would allow readers to pursue the sports mentioned. For example, one article about backpacking discussed everything from finding trails, to necessary equipment for day and overnight trips, to strategies for maximizing a woman's performance and control of her body on the trail (Rudner, 1975). This article also cited eight different books about backpacking, an address for obtaining pamphlets from the Government Printing Office and contact information for the Forest Service and the National Park Service. Providing concrete practical information about many types of sports gave readers the information necessary to pursue sports participation.

In addition to encouraging women to pursue sports and develop their bodies, *Ms.* focused on the results of sports participation. These results included political empowerment, personal empowerment, and development of bodily strength that could be used to challenge sex discrimination.

First, sports could be used as a mechanism to empower women politically. *Ms.* published many articles addressing the politics surrounding women's participation in sports and equity in funding. Fasteau argued, "Women . . . [were] . . . beginning to demand their rights as athletes" and cited multiple law suits designed to allow women equal access to sports (1973, p. 56). *Ms.* also highlighted the disparities

in funding of college sports. Dunkle showed through examples that while men's sports programs were funded by college wide mandatory fees, women's programs were mostly funded by extra-curricular efforts such as bakesales, Christmas tree sales, and donations (Dunkle, 1974, p. 114). She cited one Big Ten school that spent 1300 times more money on men's sports than on women's sports; and another university in the Northeast that funded women's sports at nine tenths of one percent of the total athletic budget (p. 114). She argued that political support for Title IX regulations offered a possibility for change (p. 114).

In addition to demanding equal access and funding, *Ms.* featured athletes who could "guide other women to equality" (Mc Call, 1977, p. 12). One example of such an athlete was Billie Jean King. Collins argued that her physical prowess in tennis was nearly equal to that of any man. He wrote, that not only could she beat her husband on the court, "In fact, she could beat very nearly all the men in the world with . . . strokes that . . . have powered her to prominence during the first five years that women's tennis has been a professional game" (1973, p. 39). As a groundbreaking leader in women's professional tennis, King was promoting active political change. She criticized anti female attitudes among the press. King said,

There is a terrific double standard with sports reporters . . . [who] . . . ask me when I'm going to retire and raise a family. Do they ask a baseball player that? They ask me about my abortion. Do they ask a football player if he's had a vasectomy? (Collins, 1973, p. 39)

King was also very aware of her status as a role model for young girls. King she said, “we’re grabbing the kids . . . No men are going to assign them their roles These kids are *really* going to be liberated” (Collins, 1973, p. 102). King and athletes like her paved the way for political acceptance of women’s physical empowerment.

The second result of physical empowerment was personal empowerment and a sense of satisfaction as women developed their bodies. In one article Breen-Bond described the pleasures of a daily run. She described the sense of personal empowerment she felt as she developed her body. She wrote, that she could “show herself that . . . it is not over, that pain is relative, that life, too, is ahead of me, that I’m . . . unique in what I can do” (1975, p. 16). She said that when she was running in the rain, she had never felt “more wonderful, more human than at that moment” (p. 16). In another article, cross country skiing was presented as an outstanding sport because “no matter how you look, or how slow you go, or how often you screw up and fall down Nordic skiing is between you and the winter and no one else” (Ferrin, 1976, p. 49). In other words, perseverance in cross-country skiing allowed you to develop yourself, independent of external judgment. Additionally, it was a sport that was personally empowering. Ferrin wrote,

I’ve skied along the soaring rims of Yosemite Valley and Crater Lake, past the billowing steam vents of Lassen. I’ve glided through elk herds and watched eagles play in the grand Tetons, and seen Old Faithful erupt beneath the pale stars with just myself as a witness. (p. 84)

She found her experiences to be empowering. She wrote, it is “so easy to get into, so inexpensive . . . , so satisfying, such great exercise. The rhythm, grace and energy it creates will make you feel proud of your body” (p. 49). Ferrin achieved personal empowerment by developing her body through sports participation. The clear implication of this and other articles was that other readers could develop a similar sense of personal pride and empower themselves as well.

The final result of empowering women’s bodies was that physical strength could be used to combat gender discrimination and sexist attitudes. Physical strength also prepared women to engage their world. Initially, one article about the use of martial arts argued that they would allow women to defend themselves against physical attack. Indeed, martial arts were a means of personal empowerment and self defense. Pellegrino argued that in the face of rising statistics for crimes against women, martial arts “can teach you to become more aware of the possible danger around you” (1974, p. 12). In addition to developing a heightened sense of their surroundings, she argued that martial arts helped women develop “a sense of competency and confidence” about their bodies and to learn “practical techniques to defend . . . [themselves]” (p. 12). She also engaged in a thorough discussion of different martial arts and made suggestions as to how a woman should choose one for herself (Pellegrino, 1974). In the case of martial arts, women could develop their bodies in a way that was empowering and allowed them to fight back, defending themselves physically. This theme linking bodily development to feminist action was repeated in other articles. For example, Loggia quoted Simone de Beauvoir who said,

Not to have confidence in one's body is to lose confidence in oneself .
... female athletes ... feel themselves least handicapped in comparison
with the male. Let her swim. Climb mountain peaks, pilot an airplane,
battle against the elements, take risks, go out for adventure, and she
will not feel before the world that timidity (Loggia, 1973, p. 64)

Thus, developing women's bodies through participation in sports empowered them both physically and emotionally. In other words, physically strong women would not be afraid to fight for their rights. In addition to promoting physical empowerment, *Ms.* featured feminist heroines who could inspire readers to action.

Feminist Heroines Models of Strength & Solidarity

To inspire its readers, *Ms.* presented many women who could be considered feminist heroines. These larger than life figures dared to pursue social change and to embrace their individual feminine strength. *Ms.* printed stories about many feminist heroes. Among the hundreds of women who were mentioned or profiled as great examples of feminine empowerment and activism were the following: 1. everyday women accomplishing great things; 2. famous contemporary women; 3. famous fictional women; and, 4. historical examples of women who fought against the sexist constraints of their time. Each of these types of women served as proof that strength, courage and perseverance could result in personal empowerment and political change. They were feminist heroes.

First, *Ms.* published a regular featured called *Found Women*. This feature included articles about women in contemporary society who were great feminist role

models. In the introduction the first time *Found Women* appeared, *Ms.* wrote, that the “heart of the great change happening to women” did not beat in any organization, book, political battle or magazine (including *Ms.* itself), rather it lived in “individual brave women” who were not necessarily famous and were the “real centers of change” (*Ms.*, 1973, p. 45). These women were working to empower women all over the country, often with little recognition. *Ms* wrote of these feminist masses, “They are the brave women all over the country who are working to change their own lives, the lives of their sisters, and the world around them” (*Ms.*, 1973, p. 45). The found women *Ms.* chose to feature were broadly representative, including women of different levels of education, professions, ages, races, etc. Some were artists and poets while others were political activists. All were seeking empowerment for themselves and others through their individual work. While some were new feminist converts, others had been fighting for human equality for years. *Ms.* recognized the “new heightened consciousness . . . in the air” felt by many of these women (p. 45). Through their struggle to define themselves and seek equality, these women were developing new epistemological understandings of womanhood itself. They questioned traditional modes of thought and sought a “new vocabulary” that was not “just handed down from dominant culture” (p. 45). Instead of accepting what they had been told they, as women, could be or do they used “their own experiences” to make “sense of their lives” (p. 45). In this way, the women featured in *Found Women* offered examples and life experiences allowing other feminists to learn from them “whether from a literal idea for a project-or simply the contagion of seeing

another person with the courage to try” (p. 45). Thus in addition to forging new understandings of women, the heroines featured in this column served as positive role models and inspiration for *Ms.*’ readers; perhaps giving them the courage to rebel in their own lives.

A few examples of feminist role models featured in the first issue profiling everyday feminist heroes included a successful feminist sculptor and mother of five who campaigned against the Vietnam war, a 77 year old woman who was studying in an Episcopal seminary and hoping to become a priest after waiting 54 years for women to be admitted to the seminary, a civil rights lawyer who was the first black woman to graduate from the University of Mississippi, an anti-poverty activist who was working to rehabilitate poor black communities in Louisiana, and a feminist activist and the Associate Provost at Wesleyan University (Lyons, 1973, pp. 46-48). These examples are only a few of hundreds of women who were profiled as found heroines in the first five years of *Ms.*

In addition to the everyday heroines, *Ms.* profiled contemporary women who were doing extraordinary things. One example was Shirley Chisholm, the first black candidate and the first black woman candidate for President in the United States. While she did not make it to the general election, Chisholm recognized that winning in a traditional sense was not the point. Her campaign itself was revolutionary. Chisholm said, “my candidacy itself can change the face and future of American politics-. . . it will be important to the needs and hopes of every one of you-even though in the conventional sense, I will not win” (quoted in Steinem, 1973, p. 73).

Because Chisholm's goal was to bring attention to marginalized groups and to promote political action, she succeeded. Steinem argued that Chisholm's campaign had a positive impact on people's lives. She wrote,

All over the country, there are people who will never be quite the same: farm women in Michigan who were inspired to work in a political campaign for the first time; Black Panthers in California who registered to vote and encouraged other members of the black community to vote too; children changed by the sight of a black woman saying "I want to be President"; radical feminists who found this campaign . . . a possible way of changing the patriarchal system; and student or professional or "blue-collar" men who were simply impressed with a political figure who told the truth as she saw it, no matter what the cost. (Steinem, 1973, p. 73)

The choice to run for President sent the message that Chisholm was not afraid to seek the highest office in the land. Not only did she, as a woman of color, deserve to be free from racism and sexism, she deserved to wield power in the American political system. Steinem highlighted several specific individuals who had been inspired by Chisholm's candidacy. One example was John Lindsay, the Mayor of New York City, who Steinem quoted saying that Chisholm, "gave voice to aspirations of millions in a system that excludes women and minority groups from full expression and equal opportunity, not only in politics but in the economic and social life of the nation" (Steinem, 1973, p. 120). If Chisholm could run for office, anyone could.



Figure 4. Wonder Woman For President.

The third type of heroine *Ms.* presented appeared on the cover of the first regular issue of the magazine, Wonder Woman (see figure 4).⁴ Wonder Woman was an exceptional heroine because she possessed both acuity of mind and bodily strength which she used to accomplish feminist goals. Initially, Edgar detailed Wonder Woman's superhuman strength and power. She wrote, "Breaking the fetters of evil with her strength; parrying bullets with her steel bracelets; sweeping through

dimensions of time and space in her invisible plane . . . [she] . . . brought enemies to their knees and to her command with her golden lasso” (1972, p. 52). Indeed, “Who could resist a role model like that?” (p. 52). Not only did she exhibit tremendous strength, her lasso gave her the power to determine the truth just as through the process of consciousness-raising, all women had the power to divine their individual truths. While feminists sought to promote a fair, equal and just society, Wonder Woman, “jumped into politics with a campaign for President-a woman to save the country from war and destruction” (Edgar, 1972, p. 55). Wonder Woman’s heroic strength was not masculine in nature. While she was as strong as a man, her use of force was “bound by love and . . . represents what every woman should be and really is. She corrects evil and brings happiness.” (Edgar, 1972, p. 55). Thus, as a fictional heroine, Wonder Woman became an iconic figure representing both feminism and *Ms.* magazine. Wonder Woman taught that women could be strong and feminine and that they had the power to understand the world based on their own experiences.

The final type of heroine featured in *Ms.* was the historical feminist. *Ms.* featured many including Jane Adams, Harriett Tubman, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, George Elliot, Mary Shelley, and Victoria Woodhull among others. They also published a feature called *Lost Women* which sought to build a women’s history by publicizing the accomplishments of historical feminists. By

⁴ From “Wonder Woman for President,” by M. Anderson and J. Alder, 1972, *Ms.*, I, Cover. Copyright by Liberty Media for Women, LLC, which is wholly owned by the Feminist Majority Foundation. Reprinted with permission.

profiling feminist heroes *Ms.* gave modern feminists a sense of historical lineage and unearthed elements of women's history that were not included in standard curricula.

One example of an historical heroine featured in *Ms.* was Amelia Earhart. Hamill wrote, "Amelia Earhart was a hero" (1976, p. 51). Earhart broke many flying records and was the first woman to pilot a plane across the Atlantic. She disappeared on the last leg of an around the world flight in 1937. Eighteen months later, she was declared legally dead. During her life, she had captured the popular imagination of Americans and has remained there ever since. A reporter wrote that while Earhart was still alive "Amelia has become a symbol of a new womanhood—a symbol I predict that will be emulously patterned after by thousands of young girls in their quest for the Ideal" (Hamill, 1976, p. 87). Earhart lived by feminist principles. For example, she presented her husband with a letter on her wedding day "that was at once a contract and a permanent declaration of independence" (Hamill, 1976, p. 88). She wrote,

You must know again my reluctance to marry Please let us not interfere with each other's work or play I may have to keep someplace where I can go by myself now and then I must exact a cruel promise, and that is that you will let me go in a year if we find no happiness together. I will do my best to try in every way. (Hamill, 1976, p. 86)

In addition to her views on marriage, she served as a strong spokesperson for personal determination and for women's issues in general. She inspired other women to

pursue their dreams when she said, “I want to do it because I want to do it. Women must try to do things as men have tried. When they fail, their failure must be a challenge to others” (Hamill, 1976, p. 90). Earhart stated, “If you want badly enough to do a thing, you usually do it very well; and a thing done well . . . usually works out to the benefit of others as well as yourself” (Hamill, 1976, p. 90). Earhart loved her life, freely pursued her goals and interests and rejected many of the social constraints of her time such as monogamy. She wrote that she was waiting for “the day when women will be individuals free to live their lives as men are free” (Hamill, 1976, p. 88). Hamill speculated that had she lived, women might not have been frozen out of the commercial airline industry that developed after her death (1976, p. 88).

Earhart’s particular appeal as a feminist heroine was in her ability to capture people’s imagination and to inspire others to dream and to pursue their dreams. Hamill wrote, “Earhart seems more alive and more relevant now than she has been since the days of her glory” (1976, p. 90). Her contemporary relevance was proven as “Young girls read books about her and dream[ed] about the stars” (p. 90). Indeed, “The words she said about women, adventure and education and marriage . . . [were] . . . still fresh and meaningful” (p. 90). Earhardt approached life as “an existential lesson, an attempt to use everything one has; to live, in Edward R. Murrow’s phrase, a life, and not an apology” (Hamill, 1976, p. 88). Maybe, as Hamill argued, that was why the popular imagination liked to theorize that she survived whatever befell her and was still alive out there somewhere “living in Japan . . . [or] . . . living in New Jersey, still guarding the secret of her war time mission by allowing the public to

believe her dead” (1976, p. 90). He wrote, “Like male heroes who were thought to live on after death . . . she fulfilled some need in us for the heroic spirit, so we cannot quite bear to believe that she is gone” (Hamill, 1976, p. 90). And, in the hearts of feminists everywhere, she lived on. *Ms.* not only featured her on the cover with the caption “better than the myth;” they also included a free iron on picture of Earhart for readers to use. Imagine thousands of *Ms.* readers in their Earhart t-shirts going to their consciousness-raising sessions, using her heroic stature as an inspiration to remain determined to live life on their own terms.

By featuring a variety of different types of women, *Ms.* provided heroines who were both real and larger than life. Everyday feminists could identify with the contemporary women featured in *Found Women*. But figures such as Chisholm, Wonder Woman and Earhart could capture their imagination, challenge the limits of their thoughts about the potentialities of women and political action and inspire them not only to dream, but to pursue those dreams with great and abiding passion.

Feminist Activism & the New Woman: Many Faces of Empowering Women’s Minds & Women’s Bodies

The 5th anniversary cover of *Ms.* featured a tree of life with the heads of many prominent feminists growing out of one body (See figure 5).⁵ This feminist tree of life was symbolic of *Ms.*’ approaches to the new woman and to feminist activism.

The characteristics of the new women were: 1. The new woman was everywoman;

⁵ From “Special 5th Anniversary Issue,” by Miriam Wosk, 1977, *Ms.*, VI, Cover. Copyright by Liberty Media for Women, LLC, which is wholly owned by the Feminist Majority Foundation. Reprinted with permission.

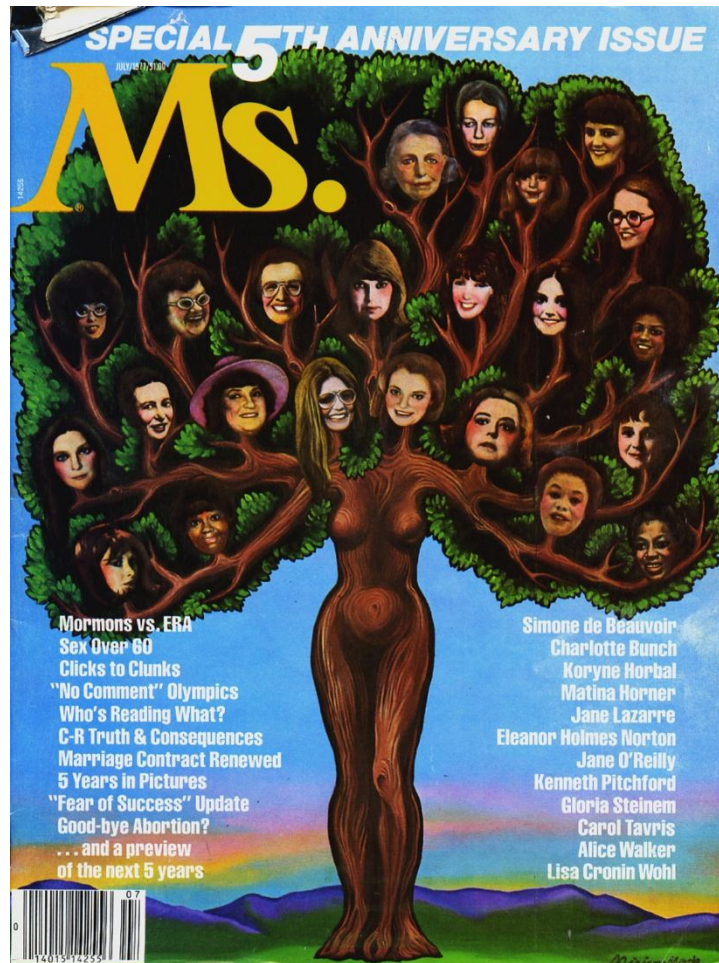


Figure 5. The fifth anniversary cover depicted a feminist tree of life.

2. The new woman demanded equal recognition of all persons' humanity in all aspects of their lives, specifically in their personal and political lives; 3. The new woman was an activist; and 4. The new woman would never give up. *Ms.*' concept of the new woman was an everywoman, reflecting a great diversity of activist human beings who displayed the strength and tenacity to demand equality on all aspects of their lives.

First, the new woman was everywoman. Steinem discussed the significance of *Ms.*' choice of the tree of life as a symbol. She wrote,

Wosk's symbol of women's growth seemed the only symbol big enough to encompass the many historical bloomings and acts of individual courage that feminism embodies . . . To include even the women who have directly contributed to the magazine would take literally, thousands of faces-and *Ms.* is only one forum in a big national movement. To include active feminists in this or any other country would take millions. (Steinem, 1977, p. 47)

The new woman, for *Ms.* was bigger than the magazine, bigger than a single organization, bigger than an individual, each woman was one glimpse of the face of the new woman. These faces grew out of "A tree with branches growing from the shared reality of woman's body, and a natural diversity blooming from its strength" (Steinem, 1977, p. 47). In discussing the National Women's Agenda of 1975, which had the support of "90 national women's organizations," Abzug wrote, "Consider 30 million American women joining together . . . agreeing to work together to achieve . . . demands . . . That impossible feat has been accomplished" (Abzug, 1975, p. 55).

The face of the new woman was reflected in the face of every woman who called herself a feminist and wanted to promote change. Morgan discussed these faces when she recounted traveling throughout the United States in such diverse places as Pocatello, Idaho, Lawrence, Kansas, Michigan, California, New Mexico, Massachusetts and Florida (Morgan, 1975, p. 99). She wrote, "This Women's Movement has given me the chance to travel through it, to witness the splendor of women's faces all over America blossoming with hope, to hear women's voices

rising in an at-first fragile, then stronger chorus of anger and determination” (Morgan, 1975, p. 99). *Ms.* devoted much of its content to covering specific aspects of this everywoman by including many individual profiles in their *Found Women* feature and devoting a large amount of space to letting the readers speak for themselves in a diversity of voices. Each woman featured had value, each woman was an activist, each woman fought discrimination based on their membership in a gendered category. In referring to the feminist tree of life, Steinem explained “So take this image and enlarge it to a global tree with roots reaching through the center of the world. Any woman can tap into it and be strengthened by it” (Steinem, 1977, p. 47). Thus, the new woman was all women and each individual gained strength from all women.

While not everyone believed that *Ms.* adequately reflected the racial diversity of the feminist movement, *Ms.*’ often included articles about and authored by women of different racial groups. The magazine published articles reflecting on black women, Native Americans, and Hispanic women in a variety of contexts. In the context of the new woman, *Ms.* recognized women’s diverse needs while identifying some common challenges they faced as women. The National Women’s Agenda signaled

The beginning of what can be an activist coalition embracing women from . . . diverse groups . . . [such as the] . . . League of Women Voters, . . . [the] . . . National Organization for Women, Church Women United, Campfire Girls, National Council of Negro Women,

Association of Women Business Owners, National Council of Jewish Women, National Conference of Puerto Rican Woman, National Women's Political Caucus, National Committee on Household Employment, . . . [and the] . . . National Gay Task Force. (Abzug, 1975, p. 55)

In addition to representing a huge variety of women's groups representing very diverse memberships, The National Women's Agenda called for "firm policies and programs . . . to eliminate those inequities that still stand as barriers to the full participation by women of every race and group" (Women's Action Alliance, 1975, p. 110). While women were diverse, they were also united in their various experiences of gendered oppression. The Women's Action Alliance wrote, "Diverse as we are, we are united by the deep and common experience of womanhood." (1975, p. 110). Additionally, they did not seek uniformity among women, rather they sought to preserve and learn from diversity. The National Women's Agenda stated, "We insist upon the protection of this diversity, and call for . . . elimination of all . . . forms of discrimination, not only those based on gender, but also those based on race, creed, ethnicity, class, lifestyle, sexual preference, and age." (Women's Action Alliance, 1975, p. 110). As represented in the National Women's Agenda, the new woman in *Ms.* cherished, respected and learned from the experiences of others.

Second, the new woman demanded equal recognition of women's humanity in all aspects of their lives. Just as the feminist tree of growth would "continue to grow until the roots and the value of a common humanity are an accepted part of the earth"

(Steinem, 1977, p. 47), the new woman demanded radical acceptance of self and others and acceptance of their common humanity. For example, *Ms.* quoted Ruth Abram who was the director of the Women's Action Alliance. She said that the Task Force on Respect for the Individual embraced all women regardless of their social or economic status, stating, "the woman on her own in this society . . . can be single, a lesbian, a nun, a woman who is married but retains her own name, a single mother, or the woman on the street" (*Ms.*, 1975, p. 112). Morgan expanded this argument when she wrote that her process of consciousness-raising had led her "to a more pluralistic tolerance of other women's lifestyles *and* politics" (1975, p. 99). Specifically, the new woman had to include all who wanted to participate to be true to the epistemological basis of the movement. Morgan wrote, "it is the *inclusiveness* of the feminist vision, the balance, the *gestalt*, the refusal to settle for parts of a completeness that, I love passionately" (p. 99). The only logical conclusion of embracing the many faces of the new woman was radical acceptance of others. It was in this way, that *Ms.* encouraged women to love themselves as the saw themselves in others.

This concept also created a profound sense of connection among women since, as the feminist tree of life indicated, they were all part of the same body, the body of woman. Morgan learned to love and respect herself and to love and respect the movement. She wrote, "I have learned to love the . . . Movement, that face in the mirror . . . ; those eyes that have rained grief but can still see clearly; that body with its unashamed sags and stretch marks; that mind, with . . . its courage and its

inexhaustible will to try again” (1975, p. 102). Radical self acceptance bred radical acceptance of others. Looking at her face in the mirror, Morgan saw her sisters in the movement. She wrote.

I want to say that woman: we’ve only just begun, and there’s no stopping us. I want to tell her that she is maturing and stretching and daring and yes, succeeding, in ways undreamt until now. She will survive the naysayers, male *and* female, and she will coalesce in all her wondrously various and diverse lifestyles, ages, races, classes, and internationalities into one harmonious blessing on this agonized world. She is so very beautiful, and I love her. The face in the mirror is myself. And the face in the mirror is you. (Morgan, 1975, p. 102)

The new woman accepted her own flaws and talents and flaws and the talents of others. In itself, this type of unqualified acceptance was a form of personal activism that empowered women in their individual lives. For, if every woman’s choices were to be embraced, any individual woman was free to choose. Radical identification among women and the sheer number of feminists were also a strong basis for promoting activism.

Third, the new woman was an activist. Just as the feminist tree of life continued to bloom, Steinem wrote, “The Women’s Movement . . . is bigger and healthier than ever, with more activists, more organizations working on more issues, and a whole new nationwide network of alternate feminist structures” (Steinem, 1977, p. 47). The new woman embraced activism in the service of recognizing every

individual's common her humanity. Empowered individuals were activists. Morgan wrote, "Housewives across the nation stage the largest consumer boycott ever . . . *women* are doing this, women who ten years ago, before this feminist movement, might have regarded such an action as unthinkable" (Morgan, 1975, p. 99). The new woman's activism took many forms. For example, Morgan noted,

I love, support, and honor the courage of every feminist who dares to try to *succeed*, whatever the realm of her attempt: the woman who sued her male psychiatrist for rape-and *won*; the woman who ran for governor-and *won*; the young girl who brought suit against her school for enforced home-economics classes (for girls only)-and *won*. There are a million "fronts" to this feminist revolution, and we *each* of us need *each* of us fighting pluckily away on every barricade. (Morgan, 1975, p. 99)

The new woman as activist promoted women's freedom in any number of specific areas. Several examples appeared in, The U.S. National Women's agenda which appeared in *Ms*. The agenda stated the new woman's overarching goals:

We the women of the United States of America, join together to challenge our Nation to complete the unfinished work of achieving a free and democratic society, begun long ago by our Founding Mothers and Fathers. Join us as we commit our lives, hearts, energies and talents to the attainment of this goal. (Women's Action Alliance, 1975, p. 110)

To promote freedom, women made a large number of specific demands “on our Government, and on the private sector as well” (Women's Action Alliance, 1975, p. 110). These demands included equal treatment under the law, political representation for women and minorities, equal education, fair wages, equal access to promotions, adequate and appropriate childcare, non sexist educational systems, equal credit opportunity, wages for homemakers, protection of alternate sexual identities, equality for all racial and class groups, the choice to be or not to be a mother, and efforts to promote women’s physical safety among many others (Women's Action Alliance, 1975, p. 110). The number and diversity of issues reflected the diversity of women’s lives and concerns.

Fourth, the new woman was persistent and would never give up. Just as the feminist tree of life was, “A tree that bends with the storm instead of breaking. That hibernates in cold seasons to bloom and bloom again” (Steinem, 1977, p. 47), the new woman recognized that, “serious, lasting change does not come about overnight . . . or without enormous pain and diligent examination and tireless, every-day-a-bit-more-one-step-at-a-time-work” (Morgan, 1975, p. 99). The strength and tenacity of the new woman reflected that exhibited by feminist heroes. The sheer number of individuals involved gave the new woman heroic strength and the ability to reach beyond what any individual activist could do. In the new world, the new woman would fight so that all women would “no longer be made to feel inferior or ineffectual for knowing and being what we are at any given moment” (Morgan, 1975, p. 99). As the “profoundly radical and perpetually enlarging vision” of feminism expanded, the

new woman would never give up her quest for “freedom and the power to forge a humane world society” (Morgan, 1975, p. 102).

Ms. encouraged readers to identify with all the women who appeared in their pages from the most humble to the most heroic. Because readers could see themselves in the women featured in *Ms.*, in many cases their consciousness was raised and each individual activist became one face on one branch of the vast feminist tree of life. Readers were the new woman who had the will and power to change the world. Because the new woman existed as a single body made up of feminist masses, she had heroic strength. This strength was born of a feminist sisterhood that was greater than any individual. Because readers could see themselves in the mirror, they could see themselves as part of the new woman and therefore claim equality through activism. Indeed, Morgan wrote, “There are millions of us now, and the vision is expanding its process to include us all” (Morgan, 1975, p. 102).

Feminist transformation, as illustrated in *Ms.*, identified the problem of gender discrimination, examined causes of the problem and provided solutions helping women to empower themselves and to empower others. Through this process, the new woman emerged. In the remainder of this chapter, I examine women in the home as their experience illustrates the process of feminist transformation.

The Housewife’s Moment of Truth: An Application

One of the first issues *Ms.* chose to address was the status of women as wives and as mothers in American society. This area of analysis was one of the most fundamental and frequently appearing in *Ms.* during the first five years of publication.

Because most women had familial relationships including husbands and children, the topics of motherhood and women's status as wives had very broad appeal. The import and centrality of this issue were demonstrated by *Ms.*' choice to feature the *Housewife's Moment of Truth* as the cover story on their preview issue (See figure 6).⁶ In this section, I use a detailed sketch of how *Ms.* described women in the home to illustrate how the broad pattern described in the previous sections of this chapter was reflected on a particular topic. In so doing, I examine problems with traditional notions of motherhood, the process of consciousness-raising in the context of the home and solutions and modes of empowerment available to women in this context. Each of these components can be understood both in terms of women's bodies and their minds.

Initially, *Ms.* identified the ways that traditional roles of wife and mother oppressed women's bodies and their minds. *Ms.* sought to expose the psychological and bodily oppression linked to women's traditional roles by demonstrating the following: 1. Women were treated as unpaid servants in the home; 2. Women were denied their rights to human dignity as they were belittled and socially ridiculed; 3. Women's roles infantilized them; 4. Women were subject to compulsory motherhood robbing them their most intimate bodily control.

Ms. proved each of these points by exposing the falsity of traditional understandings of women in the home. In one example, the preview issue's cover

⁶ From "The Housewife's Moment of Truth," by Miriam Wosk, 1972, *Ms.*, Preview, Cover. Copyright by Liberty Media for Women, LLC, which is wholly owned by the Feminist Majority Foundation. Reprinted with permission.

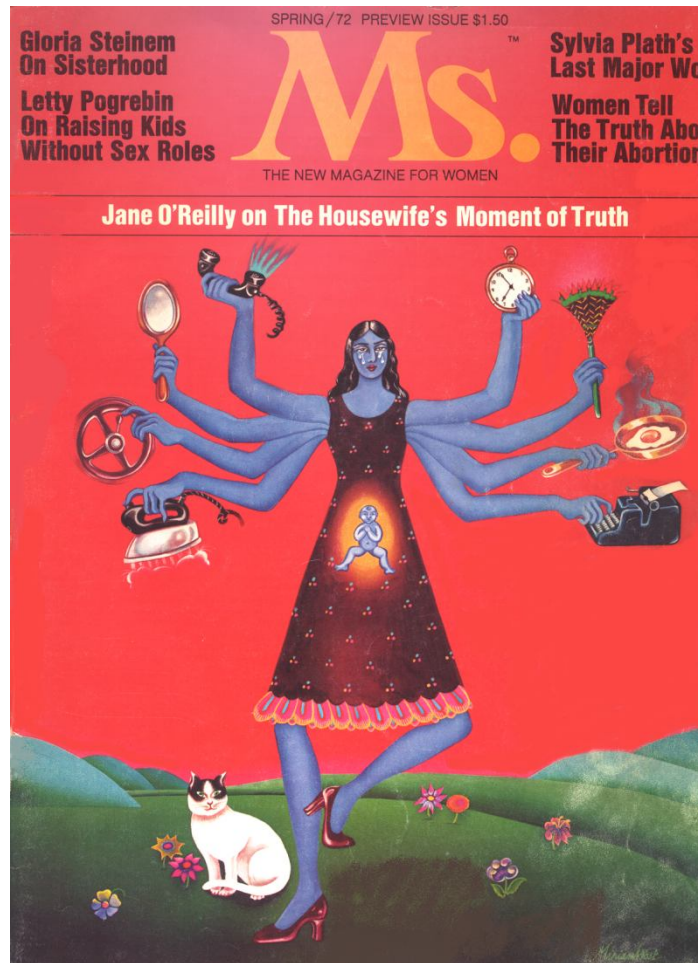


Figure 6. The preview issue depicted an oppressed and overwhelmed housewife.

demonstrated both bodily and psychological oppression. The cover art featured a picture of a mother with blue skin and eight arms, all occupied. Even her uterus was occupied. Wearing red high heels and a dress, the woman was crying. This cover symbolized oppression felt by many women. While the many arms may allude to underlying strength as possessed by the Indian goddess Shiva, the woman on the cover is crying and her face reflects the profound sadness felt by many housewives in American society. The housewife was an isolated woman fulfilling many roles and juggling so many things she did not have time for herself. She was over worked,

underappreciated and driven to the emotional edge. This example highlights both bodily and psychological control that women faced.

First, women were treated as unpaid servants in the home. According to many articles, wives were functionally unpaid servants who had no power in their relationships, were treated like children, were emotionally endangered and had no ability to pursue their own interests despite the fact that they did work of great economic value to the family and society as a whole. For example, Styfers wrote *I Want A Wife* which was an article detailing traditional expectations of women in the home. The premise of the article was that since a wife was functionally an unpaid personal servant, everyone with sense would want one. The article was inspired because one of her male friends had recently been divorced and was searching for a new wife. She wrote, “it suddenly occurred to me that I, too, would like to have a wife” (1972, p. 56). Because a wife put one through school, bore one’s children, attended to all family health appointments, fed the family, washed and mended the family’s clothes, took care of all entertainment, schooling, and social engagements for the entire family, sacrificed her income to stay home when needed, arranged and paid for daycare while she was working to support her spouse’s education, shopped for food, prepared meals, did the dishes, cleaned the house, catered to everyone else’s every needs 24 hours a day with no vacations, among numerous other specific duties (p. 56). A wife would do all this and more without complaining while attending to her partner’s every emotional, sexual and physical need (p. 56). Adding to this characterization, another author argued, “Nobody . . . has ever been able to convince

me that I am wrong to consider marriage as a prison where the first prisoner in the woman” (Fallaci, 1974, p. 57). Falalci stated, the husband “asks you to be his nurse, his secretary, his servant, that is, the mother he gave up while becoming a man” (p. 57). The picture of a housewife’s drudgery was also developed in another article that featured a help wanted ad that required, “Intelligence, good health, energy, patience, sociability” from a woman who would perform components of “at least 12 different occupations” and work for “99.6” hours every week with no salary, no holidays, no opportunities for advancement, no job security and “no social security or pension plan” (Scott, 1972, p. 56). Women were expected to perform these tasks “with the blind obedience of an ordained domestic” (Bernard, 1972, p. 110).

Second, negative societal attitudes toward wives denied them respect, undermining their human dignity. Scott wrote, “housework is not viewed as dignified or respected employment” (1972, p. 57). In fact, housewives were not only underappreciated, they were belittled. She argued, “The housewife is the subject of endless jokes and social put downs; she is patronized, condescended to and considered unemployed . . . [She] . . . is looked upon as lazy, untalented, or someone who ‘doesn’t really work’” (p. 57). Because the wife’s work was considered “low status,” the husband was to be “catered to first” (Bernard, 1972, p. 110). Thus, derogatory attitudes toward housewives institutionalized gendered inequity and female servitude in the home.

Third, because women did not often have careers there were socially sanctioned, derogatory attitudes toward them which resulted in infantilizing them.

Women were treated as children by their husbands, other men, social structures and the law. Burton stated, “There was very little difference between me and my children” (1973, p. 73). She argued that many middle class women were “a group of creative beings frittering away their talents and their energies like pampered . . . children” (p. 73). Treating women as children contributed to psychological damage and depression. Burton wrote that the “waste of human potential” was “incalculable” and “the psychological damage it does to a woman’s self-concept is infinitely more so” (p. 73). In fact, poor mental health and poor emotional health were generally associated with non-working housewives. Depression, anxiety and other mental health issues commonly associated with wives were not “because they are females who are ‘naturally’ weak, vulnerable, emotional, moody, and unable to cope” (Bernard, 1972, p. 47). The widespread assumption that women’s mental health problems were their own fault made it impossible for mental health professionals to actually help women. Instead, psychologists and psychiatrists often suggested that women’s problems were “self-generated and could be relieved only by learning to come to terms with her position” (Bernard, 1972, p. 48). In this sense, women were controlled psychologically. Their minds were disempowered because the experts taught them that their inability to cope with their inferior social positions was due to their own mental deficiency.

Fourth, motherhood was compulsory. Women in traditional married relationships could not choose whether or when to be a mother. *Ms.* argued that traditional views cast any woman who was childless, regardless of the reason, as a

“failed woman” (Rich, 1976, p. 100). Rich detailed the historical responses to childless women including those who had been, “burned as witches, persecuted as lesbians . . . refused the right to adopt children because they were unmarried” (p. 101). Pogrebin argued that traditionally, “in the minds of so many women motherhood is prescribed; nonmotherhood is deviate” (1973, p. 48). Thus, traditional gendered constructs made motherhood compulsory because it was “synonymous with womanhood” (Pogrebin L. C., 1973, p. 48). Compulsory notions of motherhood were one form of bodily oppression that women faced in traditional marriages.

In addition to describing the psychological and bodily limitations linked to women’s status in the home, *Ms.* argued that the cause of these problems was gender discrimination, not women’s personal inadequacy. For example, Bernard argued that it was “the role of housewife rather than the fact of being married which contribute[d] heavily to the poor mental and emotional health of wives” (p. 48). It was important for readers to understand that, as one author stated, “It wasn’t me. It was something outside of me” (Burton, 1973, p. 73). Burton’s comment that socialization dictated these roles as, “most girls learn to be housewives and mothers, most boys learn to be workers” (p. 73) is typical of a common theme. To support the notion that these roles were not linked to sex, Burton wrote, “were the situation reversed, with men primarily responsible for child-rearing and housework, the winners of Nobel prizes would be female” (p. 74). By linking socialization to ill effects of marriage on wives, *Ms.* could contradict the notion that women were somehow physically inferior or mentally weaker than men. To further support the causal notion that discrimination

was based on roles and social constructs rather than nature, *Ms.* published an article detailing gender roles in other cultures. Little argued that “various other cultures are more egalitarian. Without excluding women, they also incorporate men into the domestic sphere” (Little, 1975, p. 76). Thus, sex roles were not inextricably linked to nature, instead, they were culturally contingent concepts subject to change. In other words, *Ms.* helped its readers to understand that biology was not their destiny unless they, as women, refused to act.

For *Ms.* identifying the problem was not enough. They also sought to help women empower themselves. To support feminist social change, *Ms.* highlighted multiple steps in the process of empowerment. These included: 1. Consciousness-raising which allowed women to blame social norms rather than themselves; 2. Women had the human right to choose whether or not to be a mother; 3. Women had the right to determine and control their sexuality and resulting relationships; 4. Women had the right to equal treatment in marriage; and 5. Women had the right to be compensated for labor in the home or to choose a career outside the home. Women first gained a consciousness of discrimination linked to their status of women, thereby empowering their minds. They then could establish different conceptions of their personal relations on a variety of social and political levels.

First, raising women’s consciousness was a prerequisite to social change. To get women to actively influence their lives, they had to understand that different gender relations were even possible. *Ms.* printed articles that helped female readers to realize that they were not alone in the role conflicts they were experiencing due to

their status as their husbands' servants. In so doing, *Ms.* functioned to both legitimize women's experiences of unhappiness in marriage and to provide hope. Letters to the editor describing consciousness-raising experiences appeared very frequent initially and continued to be printed throughout the first five years of the magazine. O'Reilly described this moment of consciousness-raising as experiencing a type of anger. That anger was, "the clicking-things-into-place-angry, because we have suddenly and shockingly perceived the basic disorder in what has been believed to be the natural order of things" (1972, p. 54). After reading accounts from others in *Ms.*, women could understand that they were not alone and that their roles were not inevitable. Once this was understood, women could become activists in their personal lives and demand respect from others. Thus, consciousness was absolutely essential prior to any personal, social or legal change.

Second, women had the right to choose or reject motherhood. Pogrebin argued that the central concept in feminist views of motherhood was choice. She wrote, "Truly feminists are talking about choice: about making the decision to become pregnant and choosing a motherly role that is right for ourselves and our children" (1973, p. 48). Birth control and legal abortion made this concept a reality. Whelan wrote, "things have changed since the days when motherhood was the only job description women fitted and the only oral contraceptive was the word 'no'" (1977, p. 26). It was important for women to understand that "the decision of whether or not to have a child is a highly personal one, influenced by individually

determined emotional and practical factors” (Whelan, 1977, p. 29). Ensuring women the power to choose motherhood was a key element of bodily control.

Third, women had the right to determine their sexual and relational status. This determination ranged from choosing a lesbian lifestyle, to choosing celibacy to choosing a heterosexual relationship. Since there were many faces of women, there needed to be a wide array of choices of personal lifestyles. *Ms.* recognized that not all women could carve out happiness in marriage or even a heterosexual relationship. Some men were unwilling to change (Pogrebin L. C., 1977). One option for heterosexual women was to never marry. Because she believed that marriage was essentially a prison, Fallaci detailed her decision to remain unmarried. She wrote, “I did not want to play the wife. I wanted to write, to travel, to know the world, to use the miracle of having been born” (Fallaci, 1974, p. 56). This argument legitimized the choice not to marry and to pursue other personal and sexual fulfillment in life. Sexual and emotional companionship could be derived from “companions of travel” who would change throughout one’s life (p. 56). Thus, one valid choice was to remain unmarried and to pursue an individually oriented life path.

Another woman detailed her choice to remain celibate for a period of years. This particular woman felt so damaged by her female socialization and her failed marriage that she was unable to establish emotional or sexual intimacy with any man for years after her divorce. Instead, in the process of being alone, she sought to discover herself. She wrote, the longer I was celibate, the more centered I felt” (Kwitney, 1975, p. 75). Celibacy allowed her to know herself, to become stronger

and to fundamentally change the way that she interacted with the world. She wrote, “I’m taking pleasure from the relationships I’ve chosen now, and I’m not longer deflated by those that don’t work out” (p. 75). For her, individual growth could not happen inside a relationship. She added, “there is some work on the shelf that can only be done alone, independent of relationship. That work is affirmation of one’s self” (p. 75). Thus, the choice to remain alone was valid and could lead to personal empowerment, individual happiness and a sense of personal well being.

As part of choosing one’s life path, *Ms.* argued that women had the right to control their sexual orientation. The magazine legitimized lesbianism as a lifestyle choice. In one article, Boucher recalled her experience leaving her husband and the process of choosing to live in a lesbian commune, which she referred to as, “my natural habitat” (1975, p. 69). She argued that her relationships with men had always created a sense of “pressure and restraint” that was not present in her new life (p. 69). She described her feelings as she experienced a radical notion of equality. She wrote that in the lesbian community, she “was no more nor less than any other person there,” which caused her spirits to rise “like a great orange balloon” (p. 69). Through this experience, she explained that she no longer needed to present herself as “less” than she was. Rather, “Loving Jenny and working with women in the collective . . . demanded of me all the strength, courage and intelligence I could command, all the self I could possibly muster” (p. 70). Thus, women could seek empowerment including physical and mental control by leaving the heterosexual community all together.

Fourth, *Ms.* affirmed that women who did choose to marry had the right to equity in their marital relationships. In reference to marriage, Bernard noted, “Perhaps if the ceremonial vows were supplemented with guarantees of human fulfillment, then marriage could become an arena for ‘enlargement’ rather than ‘dwindling’ into wifely despair” (1972, p. 113). In that case, it might be possible for women to thrive in marital relationships based on human equality. *Ms.* encouraged women to pursue equality in their relationships, to demand that their husbands and families assume some of the burden associated with being a housewife. For example, Burton, devised a scheme to free herself from the burden of housework which was “women’s work, and . . . never done” (1973, p. 73). Burton lowered her standards of cleanliness, refused to feel guilty and established a system that shared the housework between her, her husband and her five kids. She wrote, “It is time for me to be moving on. This will necessitate everyone assuming personal responsibility for the functioning of the house” (p. 75). In a similar article, Roberts detailed her family’s response when her mother resigned from housework. In this case, the family was able to establish a routine that shared the work (Roberts, 1977).

Another way to reform marriage into a more equal partnership was to enter into a marriage contract. Not only were there historical examples such as: Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin and Margaret Sanger and J. Noah H. Slee but *Ms.* printed examples of more modern contracts (Edmiston, 1972; Shulman, 1972; Cody & Sadis, 1973). The point was not to provide a prototype for a particular life,

but to expose the assumptions of the relationship and try to work out rules that both partners could live with. Edmiston wrote,

Though many of their provisions may not be legally binding, at the very least they can help us to examine the often inchoate assumptions underlying our relationships, help us come to honest and equitable terms with one another, and provide guidelines for making our marriages what we truly want them to be. (Edmiston, 1972, p. 66)

These contracts exposed the fact that women's work was often assumed to be less valuable than men's work. With such a contract, the couple could clearly define the values, roles and norms by which they intended to live.

Fifth, *Ms.* suggested that recognizing the monetary value of women's work in the home was essential to women's empowerment. Ideally, political reforms could be made that allowed housewives to be paid. *Ms.* argued that the GNP excluded any calculation of the life's work of 30 million Americans, and consequently that economists had "vastly underestimated the total amount of productive work being done" (Scott, 1972, p. 57). Scott stated that including such work would add to the GNP by "\$250 billion-and that's not even counting all the unpaid volunteer work that women perform" (p. 57). One way to change the demeaning attitudes towards housework would be to give it monetary value. According to Scott, this could be done by giving each homemaker a salary paid by her husband or by her husband's employers. While, she admitted that this plan was probably not practical, it was designed to push people to recognize that women's work had economic value and

should be treated accordingly. Scott wrote, “economists agree that the work done at home contributes to family income, for if it were done professionally, unmanageable costs would be added to the household budget” (p. 59). Thus, recognizing the monetary value of housework would give women who chose to be housewives the respect they deserved.

Sixth, *Ms.* identified a women’s right to choose whether they would be a housewife if economics allowed. Women should be able to pursue their careers despite cultural expectations. However, the choice to work in the home should be respected as well. Scott argued that a woman should be “free to earn a living in any way that she chooses” (p. 59). However, “‘Occupation: Houseworker’ . . . [was] . . . a viable and respectable choice for anyone, male or female, provided it . . . [was] . . . treated as such, socially and economically” (p. 59). Establishing and supporting freedom of choice including the validity of the choice to stay at home was a reflection of the wide diversity that *Ms.* hoped to promote. The point was not that all women should work, but that individuals should be encouraged to empower themselves through their life choices. By validating many different choices, *Ms.* validated many different women and their fundamental rights to individual freedom.

In addition to theorizing choice, *Ms.* illustrated it by presenting feminist role models. *Ms.* included feminist housewives as examples of that choice. For example, they featured a smiling Jane Broderick on their May 1977 cover with the text, “I am the mother of eight, a housewife, a feminist *and happy*.” The article featured an interview with *Ms.* Broderick who argued that she had selected “work that she loves:

homemaking” (Lazarre, 1977, p. 51). Lazarre quoted Broderick saying, that she was “providing an environment where whole, happy people can grow” (p. 51). Broderick believed that “feminism is respecting myself and demanding respect from others. Being liberated is feeling that there is nothing you cannot do as well as or even better than a man” (Lazarre, 1977, p. 84). Through this and other articles, *Ms.* fought societal disrespect of homemakers and validated and respected women’s choices regardless of what they were.

Ms.’ depiction of the women in the home was typical of the process of feminist empowerment and discovery. Articles in the magazine criticized the physical and mental oppression associated with women in the home, helped readers to identify such patterns in their own lives, identified the societal causes of discriminatory attitudes toward women in the home and provided multiple paths to personal empowerment emphasizing personal freedom and the notion of choice.

Conclusion

Ms. encouraged its readers to become activists by publishing articles that illustrated the key steps of empowerment. These steps included: 1. Identifying the problems associated with oppression of women as a class; 2. Identifying and challenging key causes of sexist discrimination; and, 3. Suggesting solutions. Initially, *Ms.* identified the ways that traditional roles and norms disempowered women’s minds and women’s bodies. Second, *Ms.* challenged the assumption that women were naturally biologically inferior and questioned the use of language as a tool of oppression. Third, *Ms.* provided solutions encouraging women to empower

both their bodies and their minds through feminist activism. In so doing *Ms.* nurtured the new woman, a strong and independent activist who could play many roles and was not limited by societal stereotypes. The contrast between the constricted space available to women limited by traditional roles (and laws) with the strength of the new woman was the focus of *Ms.*' treatment of what it meant to be a woman in the United States. While the magazine was only one voice in society, it surely is some modest evidence of its impact that more than thirty years later there are many examples of the kind of new women described in the magazine in prominent roles in every aspect of American society.

Chapter 5

Introduction

Ms. was noteworthy at its inception because it was the first feminist mass mediated periodical. By treating women as human beings, arguing for equality and treating its readers like intelligent, credible individuals who deserved respect, *Ms.* became popular among mainstream American women who were sympathetic to feminist ideas but were just beginning to learn to understand themselves as feminists. In fact, at the beginning, most of the readers were unaffiliated with any women's liberation groups. This large audience of potential converts was a key ingredient in extending feminist ideology and mobilizing a large constituency to aid in creating widespread, durable social and political change. *Ms.* represented a broad range of feminist opinions including both well known and unknown feminist writers. They also published articles, stories and profiles written from and addressing a variety of racial perspectives.

Summary of Chapters

Since the First Wave, feminists had understood the need for publications to counteract dominant thoughts and ideas. In the *The Suffragist*, Freda Kirchwey (Kirchwey, 1921) argued for a groundbreaking new magazine that would address feminist issues of social and political reform and broaden the feminist movement to the masses. In the late 1960s and early 1970s feminist publishing exploded in the United States with the development of hundreds of new feminist publications. *Ms.* rose to prominence as the most widely popular magazine of the bunch, appearing on

newsstands and being sold in supermarkets. Because of its success, *Ms.* could spread feminist information and ideas and empower women by helping them to change their epistemological and methodological understanding of the world. *Ms.* used its commercial appeal and traditional form to spread revolutionary ideas.

Despite the best efforts of its editors, *Ms.* was criticized by both radical feminists and more socially conservative feminists. Conservatives criticized the magazine for constructing men as the enemy. Lesbians and other radical feminists criticized the magazine for failing to devote proper coverage and attention to lesbian issues and focusing too much on electoral politics. Rather than proving the magazine's insufficiency, this criticism identified *Ms.* as a locus of rhetorical agon, a site of struggle where feminists were developing, contesting and discussing ideas. Through this process, *Ms.* succeeded not only in gaining attention but in maintaining a broad range of sometimes contradictory feminist ideas. This contradiction served as an enactment of *Ms.*' underlying assumption that feminism had many faces, sometimes different, sometimes in direct conflict, but always representing valuable perspectives and the beautiful diversity of human beings. While some readers were surely alienated, most found some aspect of feminism with which they could identify. By daring to address feminist issues, publishing a wide variety of perspectives and by including readers in the process *Ms.* became the representative, for many, of American feminist ideas in the 1970s.

While several authors have written about *Ms.*, their work has primarily been either in direct response to some aspect of the magazine or describing the historical

context in which it appeared. I argue that, in its early years, *Ms.* was a unique rhetorical artifact that functioned to persuade a large number of its readers to support feminist ideals. Since the magazine had access to hundreds of thousands of women, most of whom did not self identify as feminists, they had access to the population they were trying to influence and were therefore a unique site of persuasion in the context of a broader movement. *Ms.*' depictions of their readers and their prescriptions for new roles occurred in three primary areas, their relationship with the readers as developed in the letters sections and forums, their depictions of men and their depictions of women. To assess these areas, I conducted close analysis of the letters to the editor, the editorial commentary, the text of articles specific to these themes and the covers of the magazine throughout the first five years of the publication of *Ms.* The letters displayed a unique dialectic relationship between readers and the magazine. The readers influenced editorial policy and content and they provided a wide variety of ideologies in their responses to articles. The editorial commentary was important because the editors were aware that they had direct influence on both feminist ideas and the perception of feminist ideas in larger society. The articles provided in depth explanation of concepts and therefore painted the fullest picture of what it meant to be a feminist at the time. The cover not only provided an idealized image of feminism and feminists, it also signified the generic identity of the magazine and served as a frame for understanding the magazine's content. Each area of analysis worked in concert with the others to produce a fuller picture of the rhetoric of *Ms.*

Chapter two focuses on the relationship between the readers and the magazine as it played out in the letters to the editor published in the magazine. *Ms.* both received and published many more letters than magazines with similar circulation numbers. These letters set up a dialectical interaction with the magazine which functioned as a mediated consciousness-raising forum. This forum both reified some aspects and challenged other aspects of second wave consciousness-raising. Ultimately, *Ms.* created a mediated consciousness-raising forum that improved the durability and applicability of consciousness-raising for readers. As a feminist method consciousness-raising shifted the source of knowledge production from dominant technical and scientific sources to women themselves. In this sense, it was an epistemological method of truth discovery that relied on the daily lives of women as the foundation for knowledge formation. Because consciousness-raising was an open methodology, it could adapt itself to the participants or forums in which it was used. The letters to *Ms.* functioned as a virtual consciousness-raising group that avoided many of the problems associated with second-wave consciousness-raising and foreshadowed third wave approaches. Because it was mediated, consciousness-raising in *Ms.* broadened traditional approaches resulting in a more epistemologically accurate, open and effective outcome for readers.

Chapter three focuses on depictions of masculinity in *Ms.* While the majority of articles and authors appearing in *Ms.* were about and written by women, *Ms.* devoted significant attention to men. Because masculine and feminine roles are often defined relationally and persuading men was necessary to promote social change,

Ms.' choice to include men was apt. Rhetorically, *Ms.* constructed a process of secular redemption so that men could participate in feminism. Burke's cycle of secular redemption explains the process. Initially, it involved competing systems of order striving for diametrically opposed goals. In this case, to become pure in one system implied rejection of the other. In the context of feminism, men needed to experience and publically demonstrate the purification process in order to gain acceptance by feminists. Since, many men continued in the patriarchal system, men were constructed as both enemy and friend in the magazine.

Chapter four examines the depiction of women in *Ms.* Since *Ms.* was the first mass mediated feminist magazine in the United States, the editors had a unique opportunity to reach mainstream women and convert them to the feminist cause. While their goal was to represent American women, they also sought to preserve and value differences among women. *Ms.* successfully empowered many readers by providing a three step process that moved them from passive to active roles. These steps were: 1. Exposing the traditional patriarchal control of women's bodies and minds; 2. Identifying and debunking key causes of flawed patriarchal views; and, 3. Providing solutions including consciousness-raising, physical development, feminist models, and a clear definition of the new woman.

Ms. encouraged women to become activists, identified the ways that traditional sex role divisions disempowered women's bodies and women's minds, and provided solutions and suggestions for empowerment. Through this process, *Ms.* helped readers to discover the new woman in each of them, to learn to respect

themselves and to become activists. In rhetorical terms a reader was a new woman, not a passive victim but an active participant in determining her future and in determining the future of those around her.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study

This study has two primary limitations which are: 1. The limited focus on editorial texts, articles and letters to the editors excludes analysis of fictional content, arts oriented content, the *No Comment* feature and the advertising; and, 2. Focusing on the first five years gives limited insight into the functioning of *Ms.* and the feminist movement over time. Each of these limitations suggests areas for future analysis.

First, limiting the range of texts analyzed provided an ability to assess the interaction between the readers and the magazine by exposing the way that the readers responded to editorial content. However, *Ms.* also included fiction and arts content for adults and fiction for children. Analyzing the fiction presented in *Ms.* would be informative in assessing the foundational stories of the movement. Determining whether the fiction and arts content in *Ms.* provided a mythic basis for grounding feminist ideologies would allow critics to gain insight into the strength of the foundation for feminist ideas and to determine whether feminist ideas featured in *Ms.* functioned based merely on strong ideological precepts or whether *Ms.* successfully provided a mythic basis for feminist action. Additionally, study of the fiction aimed at children might provide insight both into the fundamentals aspects of

feminist ideas and into the rhetorical process of socializing a younger generation to support social change.

The *No Comment* feature in *Ms.* republished written sexist material from a variety of other sources allowing readers to analyze and judge the material independent of commentary from the magazine. Initially, the *No Comment* feature functioned to display sexism in great variety of printed materials. An interesting study might analyze the content of the *No Comment* feature over time to assess the similarities and differences in the content of artifacts considered to be sexist over the space of more than thirty years. Additionally, comparative analysis of the advertisements in relation to the *No Comment* feature might reveal interesting similarities and differences. If the advertisements in *Ms.* were too similar to the advertisements printed in the *No Comment* feature, the fidelity of the magazine might be harmed. If the advertisements were found to be significantly more feminist than the material featured in the *No Comment* feature then the magazine might be judged to be successful in their attempts to garner progressive advertisements which were consonant with their ideology.

In terms of the advertisements, there have been several articles about the nature of the advertisements in *Ms.* including the controversies surrounding the advertisements that eventually led to eliminating them from the magazine (Carmody, 1990; Carmody, 1991; Carmody, 1992; Donaton, 1991; Dougherty, 1972; Dougherty, 1981; Farrell, 1991; Farrell, 1998; Guy, 1989; Guy, 1990; Guy 1992; Los Angeles Times, 1990; Los Angeles Times, 1991; *Ms.*, 1974 Oppenheim, 1978; Sloane, 1973;

Time, 1990). However, in recent years advertisements have reemerged in *Ms.* Personal observation leads me to believe that the new advertisements while not always explicitly feminist are at least ideologically not inconsistent with the magazine's content. A future study might compare the content of the advertisements in the early years of *Ms.* with the recent advertisements. By assessing both the content and availability of feminist friendly advertisements, rhetoricians might gain insight into several aspects of the magazine as well as the degree of social change American society has experienced since 1972.

The second limitation of this study is that it focuses exclusively on the first five years of the magazine. This focus narrows the understanding to the rhetorical function of *Ms.* to a limited time frame following the inception of the magazine. Additional study of *Ms.* as it developed and changed over time might provide multiple areas of insight. As it stands, this study provides a snapshot of the magazine and its rhetorical functions at a time when the Women's Liberation movement was gaining momentum. Future studies might provide additional insight into the function and effectiveness of *Ms.* over time as the second wave subsided and the third wave of feminist activism in the United States began.

While there are additional texts and issues of the magazine that should be analyzed in the future, this study provides a snapshot into the content and function of *Ms.* in relation to growing feminist activism. The time period analyzed is appropriate to the questions being asked and to the functional aspects of feminist empowerment as a subset of feminist understandings.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study including: 1. *Ms.* successfully featured content that promoted acceptance of men in feminist circles and defined the new woman, thereby supporting societal change; 2. A Theory of mediated consciousness-raising can be culled from analysis of the relationship between *Ms.* magazine and the readers; 3. Burke's concept of secular redemption is widely applicable to social movements and can be used to analyze those who switch between competing concepts of the good; and, 4. The functional rhetorical aspects of texts of empowerment present in *Ms.* may be generalized to provide prescriptions for empowerment to other disempowered groups. Indeed, as a mechanism for broadening the feminist movement and empowering readers, *Ms.* functioned to provide their readers with the rhetorical tools necessary to empower themselves.

First, *Ms.* successfully featured content promoting the acceptance of men and development of the new woman who could participate in feminist circles. *Ms.*' concept of the new woman as the outcome of a sometimes difficult empowerment process encouraged women, not only to empower themselves, but to gain strength from other women. If a new woman was an empowered individual activist, she could accept men as feminist supporters. Rather than limiting women to the role of victim, providing examples of empowered women allowed for broadening the movement. Because both accepting men and developing concepts of the new woman are related to changing roles and norms for individuals, providing models supporting their implementation on a mass scale is essential for producing significant social changes.

While *Ms.* did not explicitly address postmodern concepts of “woman,” inclusion of lesbians, homosexuals, transsexuals and heterosexual men in concert with their coverage of various racial groups and some attention to the economically disadvantaged was reflected in their description of how the new woman would live in a new society. The new woman had millions faces of every color, every sexual orientation, every culture and every socioeconomic background. Thus, definitionally the new woman foreshadowed third wave calls for inclusion of additional sexual identities and racial perspectives in feminism (Sowards & Renegar, 2004). In other words, *Ms.*, though imperfect, was more than a magazine for white middle class housewives; instead it challenged and redefined the very notion of womanhood through awareness and celebration of differences among all individuals.

Second, *Ms.* engaged in mediated consciousness-raising long before it was theorized in the third wave (Sowards & Renegar, 2004). Again, including the readers in an interactive consciousness-raising forum occurring in the media foreshadowed third wave descriptions of the phenomena of mediated consciousness-raising. The theory that I culled from the interaction between readers and the magazine demonstrates that *Ms.* extended and strengthened consciousness-raising as the magazine enacted it. The magazine provided a particularly good model of mediated consciousness-raising because of the high levels of reader response involved in the process. Thus, critics can both identify the functional aspects of mediated consciousness-raising and measure, to some degree, their success based on audience responses to the magazine’s content.

Third, Burke's concept of secular redemption can be applied in the context of movement studies to analyze the process of switching systemic allegiances, changing from one notion of the good to a system with a conflicting or even opposite notion of the good. When the process of moving from guilt to redemption involves switching moral allegiances, forgiveness is essential to allow an individual to gain acceptance in the new moral system which he or she seeks to join. The steps I identified in the context of *Ms.* can be used to analyze the process of ideological conversion of a sympathetic out group members for any number different social movements. In the case of *Ms.*, men were the sympathetic outsiders who sought to gain admission to the feminist cause. The process of secular redemption outlined in *Ms.* made a place for those men who truly wanted to be redeemed in society with the new women.

Finally, *Ms.* provided a forum for understanding the functional steps necessary to empower an individual in the context of a social movement. A process of individual conversion is a prerequisite to a movement's effectiveness in promoting social change. Without empowered participants, a social movement cannot thrive. Thus, the steps of identifying and naming the oppressive force, defeating the causal factors of the particular form of oppression and providing means to empowerment for both the minds and bodies of an oppressed group is essential. If only minds are empowered, oppressed groups may not fight back. If only bodies are empowered, there would be no ideological basis for action. If the social movement stopped at identifying the oppressive force, they could create victims rather than activists. If the causal factors of oppression cannot be defeated, some may continue to believe that

oppression is justified. If supporters do not learn to act, a movement is merely an idea. Thus, to promote movements that empower oppressed groups both epistemological and methodological approaches are essential. Without the steps identified above, a movement cannot gain adherents and oppressed individuals will not become activists. In the case of *Ms.*, the content of the magazine incorporated the three steps by identifying oppression in context of women's bodies and minds, identifying causal factors explaining that oppression, such as language use and biological determinism, that is no way were inherent to being a woman, and providing avenues for activism. Letters and subscription rates suggest that *Ms.* was successful. Despite the fact that the magazine was only one representative of a large feminist movement, its success in empowering readers can surely be assessed in some small measure by the continued existence of the magazine and the large degree of social change wrought by feminist activists, many of whom agree on the iconic role of the magazine in the development of the movement (Goldberg, 2007; Hopkins, 1997; Huerta, 2007; Farrell, 1998; Skenazy, 1997; Walker, 2007). As an icon representing American feminism, *Ms.* discovered and implemented effective guidelines to empowerment for its readers. Empowered readers became new women who became part of the growth of the feminist tree of life gaining strength and sustenance from one another as they engaged in feminist activism on thousands, hundreds of thousands or potentially millions of fronts.

Appendix: Copyright Approval

Sarah Partlow Lefevre
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June 16, 2009

Jessica Stites, Associate Editor, *Ms.* Magazine
433 S. Beverly Drive
Beverly Hills, CA 90212

Dear Ms. Stites,

This letter will confirm our email exchange. I am completing a doctoral dissertation at The University of Kansas entitled *Texts of Empowerment: A Functional Rhetorical Analysis of Ms. Magazine in the First Five Years*. I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation scanned copies of the following covers of *Ms.*:

May 1974 (Father holding his baby);
Preview Issue (Housewife's Moment of Truth);
July 1972 (Wonder Woman);
August 1976 (Battered Wives);
September 1974 (Cyclists);
July 1977 (Feminist Tree of Life, 5th Anniversary Issue)

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to the prospective publication of my dissertation by the University of Kansas. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that your company owns the copyright to the above-described material.

If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return it to me. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Sarah Partlow Lefevre

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:

Ms. Magazine

Signed: 

By: Jessica Stites

Title: Associate Editor

Date: 7/6/09

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